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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AS A SOCIAL POWER

JOHN SMITH D D

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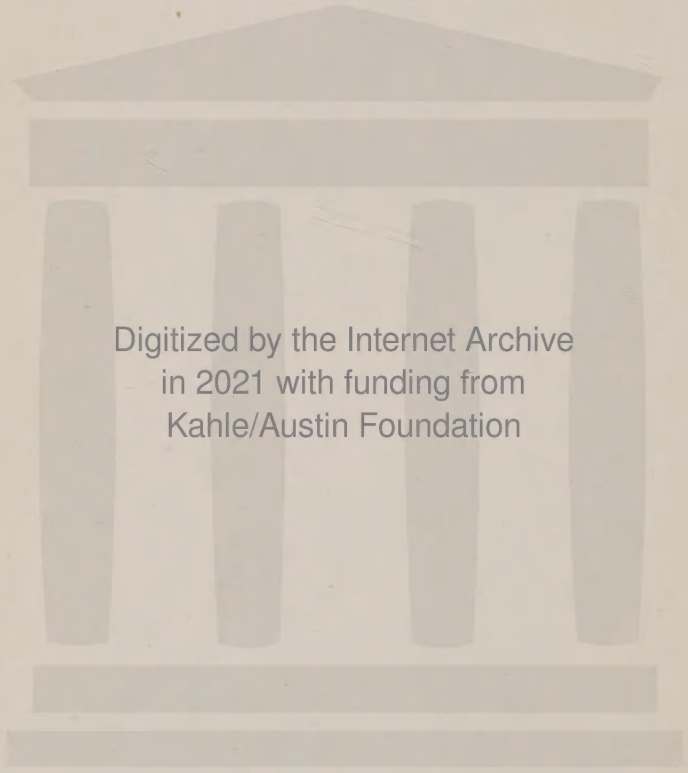
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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AS A SOCIAL POWER

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AS A SOCIAL POWER

BY THE REV.

JOHN SMITH, D.D.

EDINBURGH

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PREFACE

THIS book is offered as an individual study, from the side of religion, of one important factor in a great problem. Several years ago the thoughts here expressed were outlined in an address to a national gathering of young men. Subsequently, in a series of leading articles contributed to a weekly religious journal, a considerable portion of the second part was covered. The writer's concern is to establish the truth contained in the earlier section; and in the chapters which follow, he simply illustrates from reading and observation, without any attempt at express research, the principles previously enunciated.

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PART I

THE PREPARATION FOR SERVICE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THERE is a paradox which every Christian generation discovers afresh—the permanence, and the ceaseless progress of Divine Truth. The content of revelation abides unchanged, as it came down from apostolic times. But there is ceaseless progress in the realisation of what Christ has once for all given.

The law of progress, the way in which from generation to generation truth grows within the Kingdom of Christ, may be described thus. First, we live our new germinal conceptions, and then we formulate them. The Spirit of God, who moves in the Church, helping us to meet the ever-fresh emergencies of the new day, guides us into fresh aspects, impressions, convictions, rising out of the one substance of revelation. Then when these, reflecting with added emphasis the mind of God in His word, are practically wrought into the life and acti-

vities of the Church, they crystallise into definite opinion and become a further increment of truth in the Church's testimony.

Let us apply this thought, capable of wide application, to the subject in hand. From many points, under pressure of practical needs, we are being guided into new conceptions of Christianity as a social force. In her followers, the universal Church is taking up a very distinctive ethical and philanthropic attitude in every social sphere. The Christian spirit is a power to be reckoned with, at every frontier of discussion and controversy. And Christian men are seeing, that the triumph of Christ means nothing less, than the supremacy of the mind and will of Jesus, over all the thoughts, institutions, and activities of men.

While, however, we have these and such-like dominant convictions, manifestly owing to the presence of a spirit higher than that of man, they have not yet crystallised into a generally received system of opinion or doctrine. Especially is there far from universal agreement, as to the relation of this social doctrine, to redemption and the Christian system generally. We are in a day of broken lights and one-sided views. Men are

distinguishing things which do not differ. They are opposing to each other, aspects of truth which, rightly conceived, are supplementary. Vague in their own thinking, they are creating a vague impression that we must shift the centre of gravity in the Christian system, ceasing, in our concern for society and social amelioration, to be principally occupied with the pardon, renewal, and life in God of the individual soul.

The aim of this small volume is to illustrate this relation, to show how Christianity comes to have a social influence, and at what points and in what form this social force is exerted. Tracing thus to the fountain-head, all the streams of potency which it has set flowing in the public life of the world, we can see, not only the source and the primitive impulses which have set them in motion, but their spiritual quality, which marks them off from all other forces at work among men.

Should we succeed in our endeavour, we shall have made a contribution to intellectual clearness in this fertile and interesting region of truth. We shall incidentally have answered and overthrown those imperfect views, to which reference has been made, by discovering in the renewed

consciousness, and in the springs of the new life, the origin of all those social qualities and impulses, which have redeemed from pagan vice, and reconstituted on nobler lines, and revived again and again, civilised society. And methinks we shall, in deep humility of soul, win a new faith in the power of the Christian Church, more largely receptive of the influence of its Head, to carry unspeakably further the moral and spiritual elevation of mankind.

Mr. Benjamin Kidd, in that remarkable book, *Social Evolution*, which really turned the edge of the agnostic position, makes a very striking statement. He says that the only known force which has been able to bring individual self-interest into harmony with the public welfare has been religion, and religion with supernatural sanctions. These are not his precise words, but they contain his thoughts.[1] And they lead us

[1] Though Mr. Kidd's language is technical, savouring of the evolution philosophy, it may be worth while quoting his 'law,' which he establishes through his most significant treatise. Speaking of the social system he says, that 'there is maintained within it a conflict of two opposing forces: the disintegrating principle represented by the rational self-assertiveness of the individual units; the integrating principle represented by a religious belief, providing a sanction for social conduct, which is

to the point at which most profitably we may break ground.

There have been many, and not only in our own time, who have been eager to exploit Christ and Christianity, in the interests of some specific social philosophy. And there are certain social aspects and principles, which may readily enough be discerned to have an inseparable connection with the Christian view. But all attempts, to confine within limits of a specific school or theory the whole teaching of Christ on social questions, have ended in failure. The glory of Christianity is that it can come into all social and political conditions, and, livingly adjusting itself to these, can carry on the moral progress of the world.

Mr. Kidd, from the standpoint of science, saw clear and far, when he discerned that in her supernatural sanctions lay our religion's social power. The original contribution of Christianity to the life of society and the world, was not a new theory of social relations, but a new personal factor. It created a new type of manhood, in

always of necessity ultra-rational, and the function of which is to secure, in the stress of evolution, the continual subordination of the interests of the individual units to the larger interests of the longer lived social organism to which they belong.'—*Social Evolution*, 104.

this profoundest of all senses, that it called into being within man's soul (remaining otherwise the same, rooted in the contexture of race-life) a new nature, looking out to a new order of facts, moving within new horizons, governed by new motives. And from this nature, related to God and Eternity, and instinct with an answering love for love received, grew up a specific character, conforming to an eternal will, working to an eternal end, seeking an eternal perfection.

As a quality or potency of this redeemed character, every pulse of social force in Christianity primarily exists. This life in its proper nature as regenerate and redeemed, and in process of holy conformity with the divine, is the absolutely regulative element in this whole sphere. Out of this life comes the conception of social relations which sends us with a specific direction into all social spheres. From what obtains in the soul's relations to God, we get the master lights, the specific principles, which govern us in every social activity. Reaching back to the original plan of all existence in the counsel of God discovered in Christ, the Christian brings to every social question a height of motive, a width of horizon, a depth of purpose, which make his

action educative in the highest degree, while immediately beneficial; a very spring of eternal principles and considerations, that go on, working by their inherent vitality, for the moral health and invigoration of the race.

In subsequent chapters we desire to work out from Scripture and illustrate in detail this great truth. Even after the many contributions which have been made in recent times to the study of the social aspects of Christian truth, there is room for such a discussion. Indeed, the probability that attention is to be more than ever called to such aspects of truth, makes a study of the origin and evolution of the social principle in Christianity, indispensable. Historians like Mr. Lecky in his *History of European Morals*, writers in a more practical interest like Mr. Brace the author of *Gesta Christi*, have attempted to exhibit the distinctive influence of the Christian Spirit on social and public life. And when these writers, and others who might be named, present the more materialised and definite expressions of the new leaven at work in society, we feel how much is left out. We cannot understand what these altered conditions and new influences mean, or how far they are destined to go, till we under-

stand in their origin and intention, the potencies which have created them. And we fail to discern those subtler forces, answering to the atmosphere and climatic influences of nature, which, silent and all-pervasive, have been shaping men and societies and nations to far larger issues.

Again, in our systems of Christian ethics, we have certain chapters devoted to social ethics. And those are of great value as presenting the teachings and deductions, directly or indirectly drawn from Holy Scripture, as to various aspects of social duty. But such treatises also leave very much out of account. From these didactic statements, the reader would never learn that the social developments of Christianity had been a living growth, the free expression of Christian conviction and character in all stages of progress, working through all varieties of type, disposition, and gift, utilising endless varieties of circumstances, reaching out with every advance of the Christian consciousness to riper and fuller social expression, now breaking into brilliant temporary blossomings as in chivalry, or deviating into partial manifestations like the crusades or even monasticism, yet never ceasing, learning by failure, profiting from every furnace of trial, filling

the enlarging scope of new opportunity with finer influences and even fresh species of fruit, and so striving for dominion over the many-sided life of man.

We must study the life which has produced these fruits in its sources, in the manner of its entrance into the social sphere, in the directions of its social activities. We shall then be able to rise above isolated effects, and behold in the external life of men, the correlated manifestations of the Christian Spirit. We shall discern them in their living outflow, innumerous individual varieties, ceaseless modifications and corrections, and even seeming clashings and collisions, yet pervaded by a common spirit, and working to one all-comprehensive end.

Our subject then branches into two leading divisions. First, we must very briefly exhibit the root from which these potencies of the Spiritual character spring—the type of life which gives rise to them, the manner in which they emerge in experience, and how they advance in covering the whole territory of experience. Secondly, having dealt with these matters, we shall take up the potencies in detail, and show how they work in the several spheres of social action. We can

only promise a popular treatment, in a directly religious interest. We may, however, suggest some thoughts, which in more fertile soil may bring forth richer fruit.

Meantime, one practical reflection comes home to the mind. Not by the elimination of the redemptive element in our faith, but by its exaltation ; not by a dissolution of doctrine into vague allegiance, but by a definite rising along the prescribed path of Scripture truth into clearer conception of God's way of holiness, and by a fuller walking in that way, can Christian men grow in moral influence over society, as they grow in surrender, self-crucifixion, and spiritual likeness to their Lord.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY IN TRAINING FOR SERVICE

THE aim of this volume has been described. We are seeking, not so much present guidance with regard to immediate social responsibilities, as the right point of view, from which to consider the entrance of the social element into the Christian religion. We have no title whatever to intrude, as a judge or divider, among those who are discussing social theories, and pressing their particular schemes on the notice of the public. We have seen, however, on high authority, the commanding influence of religion on social problems, and if we can show how from that individual relation of righteousness before God, which Christ came to establish, all the social activities of redeemed men spring, we may help others in their meditations and judgments.

If this is to be thoroughly done, however, we must not rest content with reading off the findings

of our individual experience. For practical ends of religious stimulus and edification these findings are of great value; although even then they must be tested and supported by Holy Scripture. But when we are facing a problem so vast, as the power of Christianity to resist all disintegrating influences, and provide the unifying force of human society, we long for something more authoritative, all-embracing, and exact, than any personal findings could be.

About a generation — more or less — after Christ had passed away, some of those who had absorbed His teaching, were led to put down in writing their crystallised experiences of life and conduct, truth and duty. They did this under circumstances, which of themselves gave a peculiar importance to their teaching. The originating facts of Christianity were to most of them matters of immediate personal experience. Their risen Lord had recently passed from earth to the unseen. His absence from earth, however, proved but the extension and perpetuation of His influence. The apostles, in a sense wholly new, became conscious of 'the spiritual life around this earthly life,' of a sovereignty whose seat was in Heaven, of power flowing forth from the

unseen, of a vast world of spiritual forces, helping and hindering. These seemed solid as the things of sense, from their unquestioned results. In the consciousness of these heavenly realities, they went forth to their mission of subduing the world, fronting a civilisation that, hurrying to dissolution, presented on every side utter contrasts to the Kingdom of God.

In these circumstances, which would never recur again, those men were empowered, as the event proved, to write out the principles of the renewed life, the vital elements of the new consciousness of faith, the lines of growth, the new living senses of obligation springing from gracious relations to God and man, in terms of experience, but with a universality and an unerring truth, which should serve as a mirror and guide for all future generations of Christians. And in order of time, these Epistles form the nucleus of New Testament Scripture. Christ was setting up a Divine Kingdom on the plane of the Spirit. First of all, the new unit of a redeemed experience had to be described on every side, brought out into full contrast with every other possible condition of the soul. To that redeemed man, the whole discovery of the Kingdom was to be made.

In and through him all its powers were to be realised. Then, sifted from a great mass of tradition, came the Gospels, presenting the Person of the Redeemer, His consummate purity, His holy obedience, His self-dedication to suffering, His ideals of the Kingdom.

While the Gospels, then, are of prime importance, as exhibiting to the redeemed man, in the vivid concrete of fact, in profound imagery, in far-reaching ethical principles, and in prophetic forecast, that great Kingdom to which Christ has introduced him, yet the Epistles keep their nuclear position. In them are the statics and dynamics of the redeemed consciousness. The man who sees the Kingdom of God, who is able to realise the ideals of Christ, is the man begotten from above. All kinds of benign affections spring from following Christ, but we are not to consider that following to be identical with a mere outflow of natural affections. All good acts must spring from a good life, formed in the soul by God. The redeemed character is a divine creation, determined from within by the truth which it receives, by the Divine Spirit who makes real to it the things of God, and by the new-loving obedience, leaping up in response from a Spirit-quickened and

love-inflamed heart. Despite their occasional form, then, the immediate purposes which they served, and their frequent hortatory strain, these Epistles are of fundamental importance in the scheme of revelation—containing the science of the redeemed experience — according to whose vital laws the Kingdom of God will take shape, and Christian personalities exert an influence on society and the world.

These remarks have been rendered necessary because, as we shall see more fully later on, the growth of the Kingdom and the accumulation of social influence, like what obtains in vegetable and animal life, is from within, a vital process, the result of the free action, in personal units, of spiritual gift and character. Everything in our study hangs on the accuracy with which these units of character are analysed and presented to our view. Further, we are about, for the sake of condensed treatment, to work out our view from a brief portion of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians. If we had not found, then, everywhere throughout these Epistles, a truly scientific exactness, yea, a divine depth of vision beyond all human measures of exactness, in the interpretation and education of redeemed experience,

we would hesitate to believe that there could be such a range of meaning in clauses so seeming simple.

With Bishop Lightfoot we believe that the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Philippians are of the nature of an appendix. Manifestly Paul is drawing to a close with, 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord' (iii. 1). Something, however, compels him to resume. He is at the meeting-place of all the conflicts and confusions of ancient civilisation. Led by Nero, Rome was in a perpetual whirl and riot of the flesh; forces of evil, ever emerging, threatened its overthrow. Yet the life in God could be lived victoriously amid all. As Giotto in one sweep drew a perfect circle, presenting it to Pope Benedict in proof of his powers, Paul in a few bold lines draws a picture of a man in Christ, avoiding the Scylla of self-righteousness and the Charybdis of licence, rising into ever-growing conformity with Christ, fearless of opposition, fronting all possible change, yet filling every sphere of present opportunity with the new spirit of Jesus. The portrait is etched roughly in, amid personal references and side-glances of many kinds; but, once fairly grasped, it stands out

a pattern picture of the Christian, though shaped to the special exigencies of apostolic times.

The immediate occasion seems to have been an outburst of Jewish opposition, or proselytism. With peculiar severity, he denies to these opponents any of the elements of the godly character. Dogs, evil workers, they are nothing better than self-mutilators, in what they term circumcision. For there is no spiritual significance behind—no separation to God, or life in Him.

Here, in a sentence, is the vital element of the redeemed character — separation to God. But the Christian has a very special separation. He has not received an external mark merely, to witness that this is a man separated in every faculty of body and soul to God. He is yielded up to the living Divine Spirit. In his inmost being, he is separated unto God, through voluntary surrender on his part, and inhabitation by God's own life. In that indwelling power, he acts against the swollen energies of the sinful self, serving God, making his life one homage to God. He does this freely, moved from within by love and desire. He is out of the region of law, in the sphere of sonship, akin with God through His communicated Spirit. This is the normal plane,

and spirit, and fellowship of the Christian believer. Decentralised, God-possessed, he finds in God not only a fountain of personal life, but a bond of union with men. This mighty change, existence on this new plane and in this new power, underlies and accounts for all that he becomes or achieves.

And, following out Paul's statement, we are in this wonderful condition of liberty and power and fellowship; not through anything of our own: 'we make our boast of Christ.' Not only did He deliver us at the first, in Him we stand delivered; in Him, on the ground of His sacrifice and through His intercession, do we enjoy every blessing of this new condition. And accepted in Him, entering through Him into union with God, realising the presence of the Spirit through His grace, we have broken utterly with all confidence in ourselves. We see at once the incurable hostility and the inability of the flesh to secure one of these blessings.

We have said nothing directly of the natural qualities of the human personality, because human nature has become conscious of the constituent qualities of its own higher life, more from the working of God's grace in fertilising power within its faculties, than from any other cause. In the

brief word of Paul which we have just analysed, the constituents of personality stand out in clear light—the consciousness of freedom, the sense of dependence on God, the conviction of being under obligation, a power of judging the adequacy or inadequacy of one's own acts, their right and wrong: faith—that power of the whole personality to make appeal in dependence, and under the sense of need, to God.

But not only is man's free responsible personality discovered to itself in grace, but because the whole strain of that grace-relation rests on Christ, the human personality comes under the magnetism of the mighty Personality of the Redeemer. And here the apostle, with splendid originality, works out a thought whose expansion might well take an equivalent volume—the growth of the finite human personality up into ever fuller union with the Son of God. Bound to Jesus by the bond of an infinite obligation, the believer sees rising before him a great constellation of ideals—personal ideals, all fulfilled in Christ—which draw out every side of his being in ever-mounting surrender. The sum of all good blossoms out in Him, blossom upon blossom, and Paul throws himself out in surrender, seeking by the Spirit to conform to

that Higher Will, and live in true kindred and fellowship with that perfect life.

And so, if the Christian character is to culminate in social activities, and prove the transfiguring moral force of time, it begins to form in quite another sphere,—in the sanctuary of the heart with the living Lord. The outwardness of world-dominion is to spring from a deeper inwardness, than the human soul has ever before known. Christian character shall rise so high and branch so widely, because rooted so deeply and by every tendril of the nature, in personal fellowship with Christ.

Since, then, the social power of the Christian personality is the power of Christ manifested in and working through it, we are at the generating centre of the whole movement, when we study, as now, the manner in which, and the stages by which, the human personality is taken up into the perpetual and eternal fellowship of the Son of God. Only through the establishment of such a contact, could there flow over into man such energies of God. Surely we are on holy ground, surely we need the fullest purging of mind and heart, when we come into that place, where, strand by strand, the great cable of the human heart is

woven into oneness with the life of the Son, so woven that it can stand all strains, not only of personal needs, but of world-conflicts, and shall yet bind the whole life of man to the throne of God.

In Dante's great poem of *Purgatorio* there is a magnificent figure which in a manner fills the book. We see how Dante climbed the mountain of perfection. That, however, is no task for any fancied middle state, but the test and trial of time, issuing in the consummation of eternity. Still the figure, used after our own fashion, will help us on our way. The plain where Paul and the saints sing their *Israel in Egypto*, their triumph-psalm, is the plane of conscious forgiveness. 'They worship God in the Spirit, exult in Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh' (iii. 3). At first they exult in mere possession; but presently in the sacrifice of Christ, their one hope, there rises before them a great IDEAL OF SACRIFICE. Since He has given all for them, they must sacrifice for Him. And so they begin to climb, Paul leading the way—'What things were gain, those I counted loss for Christ' (iii. 7).

He has not travelled far in the path of sacrifice, his life has not long swung upwards round the spiral stair of self-crucifixion, before the apostle

finds that an experience so conditioned, is no mere asceticism, no mutilation of the God-given nature, but emancipation. With every upward step comes new vision. Losing the goods of self, we gain the higher good of love. We begin to see existence lying under the light of love. Every act of self-sacrifice liberates the soul from the selfish circumscriptions of the past. A breath from the Infinite blows through us. We are linked to the larger life of God. A new sense of the infinite worth of being leaps up in flood-tide within our hearts; and in the joy of first attainment we see the glory of the life of sacrifice, consummated in the Person and work of Christ. All glories of possession and power dwindle before that personal glory, which gleams, a very apocalypse of perfect manhood, out of the fiery ordeal of failure and sacrifice. And so, losing all sense of loss, Paul thinks only of the gain to come through loss. An IDEAL OF KNOWLEDGE gleams up the steep, wooing at once to fuller self-crucifixion and truer self-oblivion. Things—material possessions—what are they but loss, excrement, a waste matter, when put in comparison with such excellences of the soul. 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,' etc. (iii. 8). The things which have been given up are no more forfeited boons. They have no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth.

How far that carries us up the mountain only those can know who have sought with self-crucified souls to enter into the mind, and do the will of their Lord. But we are very distant from the summit still, and the next stage is not one which would ever occur to any of us. Here we must observe the working of the Spirit, and not obtrude theories of our own. And we mention the matter because defect in perception of the distinctive elements of a Christian experience, and ignorance of the real strands of a Christian character, lead to defective views of the personal and social influences which spring therefrom. The recognition of love as the quality of the highest life is now general. But men work out their conceptions of love from ordinary human levels, or from certain philosophic concepts, in such a way as to create an effusive sentimentalism, or social gospels, distinguished at once by exaggeration and defect.

As life is only through Christ, so in every movement and aspiration can it feel and act

aright only through the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Only He can interpret this life to itself and draw it on to higher things; and He teaches us at this point in our upward progress what we would never have learned for ourselves. The next coign of vantage which we would reach is the IDEAL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. When we came first to Christ we needed a righteousness with which to cover us. But the old need (which never leaves us) comes with a new intensity to our hearts at this point. Most men look upon this teaching of loving self-sacrifice as a counsel of perfection. In the Spirit we see that it describes the life of God, which we must live if we are to be His children. He lives to love, His whole activity is an outflow of love. We can have no kindred with Him, save as in the Spirit we are living that life of love.

The moment that we discern this truth, we get a new vision of sin. We discern, mounting immeasurably far above our former thoughts of sin, our defects in the view of love, the egoism of our religion, the self-absorption in personal need which survives our self-surrender, the circumscription of our sympathies, the narrow censoriousness of our judgments, our ill-considered words

and deeds. Before God we feel, as we did not even at our first coming, our need of being covered with the blood of Christ. What was our first refuge becomes our daily resort, under the piercing vision of God.

And there is far more behind. If we are ever to be conformed to the mind of Christ, there is only one way. We must come just as we are—and not merely when we are hounded by particular senses of sin, but always, through Christ our righteousness, to God, confessing the remanent being of sin, as well as whatever acts of sin. We must confess our pain, at being so infinitely far from the heights of His perfection. Anew we must renounce sin utterly as a law of life. Anew we must renounce self as a being of sin. Anew we must yield ourselves to Christ, that in Him we may be accepted and brought nigh to God. And so what we want is not a personal excellence apart from Christ, but to be found in Christ, to rise up into a larger union and identity of interest, spirit, and aim with Him.

The lily grows up from within, sheathed in the enclosing stalk and leaves and calyx; but pushing up invisibly from within, it emerges a bud, a flower-bell. And so Paul wants to be

swathed in this union with Christ, identified with Him in death and resurrection—'Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which comes from an hourly trust in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (iii. 9). And his deep desire for this realised oneness, is that Christ and he may be one, in spirit as in standing. That is a marvellous saying—found in Christ—nowhere else, wholly taken up into Him, personally yielded, possessed by His mind and aims; Christ growing up in him, into a new individual manifestation, through his continual surrender.

Here is the marvel of the Gospel. At this point we see, whence comes the new personal dynamic, which transfigures private, and social, and public life. The man who will not allow for this creative element, simply does not know the facts and forces with which he would deal. Through identification with Christ in His righteousness, we are carried off the old false centre to a true heart-surrender. Through these open channels of trust, the energies of the spirit flow. We begin to live under the influence of new considerations, amid a new atmosphere of feeling and thought. As we are willing to move in these currents, the

Spirit, working from within, quickens every reach of our nature to which we could never get down, so that there are outblossomings of desire and resolve which are a marvel to ourselves. Our individuality, all our special traits, come out into fuller expression. It is we who act and grow and are being built up in character, yet infused with all, reigning in all, shining forth ever more markedly, are the spirit and image of Jesus. The Master is reproduced in the servant, the Head is living through and controlling the member, the whole redeemed and sanctified personality lies within lines of a supreme surrender, and is standing on a footing of continual dependence upon the grace and power of Christ, so that the Christ in him is a larger element than his own individuality. Found in Christ—a Christo-centric personality is drawing up, and revealing through a particular human type, the glory and power of Jesus.

This is the character that has worked such wonders in the social life of the world. Without that peculiar preparation, we could not have had the characteristic effects to be exhibited in later chapters. Christ is the great lifting power of human society. He creates the ideal of sacrifice

in those whom He has redeemed. Along the difficult path of sacrifice, He raises them to a vision of Love as the good of all life. And pressing towards this ideal of knowledge, those who are seeking at all cost to live this life of love, are drawn into closer fellowship with the righteous Redeemer,—in Him and by His grace rising toward a life more and more conformed to His own. Let us pause here, and continue the upward progress in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST AS A SOCIAL DISCIPLINE

WE have reached a very significant stage. In his progress hitherto up this great mountain, of sanctified conformity to Christ's will, we have seen the believer reach a platform which is an epoch in his experience, and will remain an epoch to the end. Frankly, continuously, he is living off self as the law of his life, from the root of living union with Christ, and by the forces of His grace.

So soon, however, as the Christian man realises the forces which are at work in him, and which he may continually enjoy, while he maintains living union with Christ, he feels for his staff and scroll. He longs, with this new power, to reach a closer conformity to the Spirit of Jesus. In this surrender and fellowship with Christ, righteousness is a practicable ideal, not as a personal achievement, but as the complement

and completion of his faith; the forces of grace coming in through the open gate of faith to build up a righteousness in the Spirit and after the likeness of Christ.

As he mounts up with painful footstep, surrendered to Christ and deriving all strength from Him, the ideal of a righteousness in His strength merges and is lost in a further height, which now stands out clear against the sky. Why,—what is he aiming at? Condemnation is past, legal standards are done away. This which he has been calling by the hard legal name righteousness, is nothing less than likeness to Jesus, conformity to His will, identity with His Spirit, being built up in His image. An IDEAL OF IMITATION becomes the passion of his soul—'That I may know Him' (iii. 10). Steadfastly he lays himself out to live as Christ lived in the world, to grow up into His thoughts, to manifest His Spirit, to realise His aims, and to live His life of uninterrupted communion with and perfect submission to the Father, dying to self, living for the great ends of His Kingdom.

To many that seems the easiest thing in the world, but it is the most difficult. You cannot begin to imitate Christ, till you are fully sur-

rendered to Christ and are living in the power of His Spirit. In any other way, you are certain to be caught with surface qualities of His mission, or specific applications, to the neglect of that central spirit of trust, and love, and obedience, that glorified all. If in the strain and stress of a natural self-denial, we attempt this imitation, we breed asceticism. If in modern wise, we grasp His social teaching, without a surrender to His Person and appropriation of His Spirit, we win more or less of His doctrine, but without the inner vision that keeps from exaggeration, or the transfiguring power that, as vital sap, makes all things new, as fire, melts barriers away. There is nothing which we want so much in the present day, as the originality and power which come from a high standard of the imitation of Jesus. And with all the eager searching for a more excellent way, characteristic of our time, few there be, comparatively, who find it.

We must entertain a very high respect for Him whom we would imitate. Respect must deepen into worship,—that profoundest of all worship, in which we abase ourselves to nothing, that the Holy Spirit, applying the truth of Scripture, may bring the mind of Christ as a living quality and

power into our minds. And it is only when this attitude is the law of the life, repeated every morning, that bright and strong like an alp above the whirl and din of our own thoughts, the mind of Jesus stands out clear and unmistakable, in a light and with a constraint, which are of the Spirit of God. The subtle secret influence is so simple, that an unreflecting mind may not discern the wonder of it. We are guided to do the right deed, to sound the true note, to touch with sure hand, the springs of the human heart. We are kept above our natural failings, in a quiet intensity of Christlike endeavour. The whole may be on life's commoner levels, beneath the notice of the world. But hearts are being quickened into recognition of self-denying love, generous impulses are being kindled in a small company of plain people. The actual mind of Jesus in some fragment of its activity is alive and operative in human hearts again.

Carrying us past all theories,— asceticism, socialism, communism,— the Holy Spirit, right where we are, in the set of circumstances in which we find ourselves, kindles that spirit, to which the will of Jesus is perfect good. Our immediate concern is not so much touching the outward

conditions of life, as loving men with something of Christ's own love. And in this there is no ascetic strain. Changed in heart, illumined from within, we find in this life pure joy, perfect liberty. We do not crucify our natural kindly feelings, or our common-sense. This life of love, taught and maintained within us by the Holy Spirit, appears in our view—albeit we could not originate one pulse by any strength of our own—appears the very essence of reason, allying itself with whatever resources of natural faculty we possess. When we are being carried far in fervours of intercession into converse with Christ, bearing burdens of need into His presence, and bearing away clear lights of His guiding, we nevertheless anoint our heads and wash our faces, and mingle among men, distinguishable where we are distinguishable, only by brightness, and sympathy, and overcoming grace, and light, and hearts 'at leisure from themselves.'

And while the sons of the Father, in this imitation of Jesus, are busy along a thousand lines of outward life, in innumerable sets of circumstances, making the mind of Christ an operative force within many wills, and in many parts of the social organism, what is happening to

themselves? They are beginning to discern with awe the great School of Christ into which they have come. Old interests and preoccupations of the natural man begin to fade away. Even the bounds of this mortal life glimmer into a diaphanous mist, through which the eternal outcomes of the present can be discerned. The moral and spiritual issues of things stand clear and bold above the flux of temporal concerns. And in and through all, discovered to us by the Holy Ghost, is the Christ by whom the will of God is being perfectly realised on earth and in heaven ;—not a mere historic reproduction, not the Christ of monkish tradition, but the Christ as He was, and is living again to us, in the power of the Holy Ghost. We are brought near to Him in holy hours of prayer,—as those through whom His present will may be done. We feel His searching holiness. We yield ourselves by the Holy Spirit that, purged in vision and will, we may be fitted for His service; and under the shadow of that present fellowship, His life stands out from the Gospel page in a glory which we had never before discerned. Day by day, as from the Sanctuary of His infinite Being, His thoughts of God possess us in their grand originality. We are carried

into the holy place of His own reverence for the will of God; we see the childlikeness of His obedience; we enter with a trembling sympathy into that great experience of joy in suffering, for the glory of God.

It is a school of personality: and knit to this great Divine-Human Personality by surrender, hourly yielded to Him, having Him hourly discovered to us in the one perfect medium of the Divine Spirit, we grow up into Him. And not only in the direct gaze and fellowship of devotion does the surrendered soul come to know, but in all the reflections of this central light, from other persons, from public movements, from popular aspirations. He 'becomes my universe,' as Browning sings. All our thoughts are taken up into the circle of His purpose; not only when we read the Bible but when we read the newspapers, and mingle with affairs, and agitate reforms, and look over the wall of our limitations, at other fields of knowledge and action, with which we are only very imperfectly acquainted, are we conscious of a Presence, and see dimly the converging lines of a Purpose, reaching out to a future which we can only dimly see.

And the fact of this sends us back to Himself.

Who are we, to be in the thick of such movements? Sin takes on a new heinousness, appears an utter fickleness and self-willed caprice in those who should be steadfast sons of God. Daily we must get the cleansing of His precious Blood. Daily in the depths of abasement must we receive the filling of the blessed Spirit. We must be content to let our fond fancies be set aside, to be humbled and shamed, when we have let self creep in, that clear as a gleam from Alpine snows may come to us again the thought of Christ, and that we may stand on the rock of His will, in the line of His working. And so the world-purpose of Christ, and His personal relation to us, act and react on each other. The further we sink into His holy fellowship, the more aflame our souls are, that His will may be done on earth,—His will in the scope, manner, spirit, and measures of it as well as in the substance, though all human plans and machinery should be confounded in the process. The more we busy ourselves in seeing that His will be done in every sphere to which our influence can extend, the more continuously shall we seek to be self-emptied before Him, and cleansed from fleshly infirmities, and filled with His Spirit.

And now in this close communion and imitation a new thought comes—opening up practical ideals of immense range. Since we are in such close sympathy with our Lord — having (human infirmities excepted) one end, one will, one spirit— all the powers of His resurrection-life may be drawn upon, in the measure of His people's faith —'that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection' (iii. 10). By this we mean not only the energies of the Spirit welling up as life from within, but powers working with the consecrated will to the securing of exceptional results, orderings of providence, manifold control of outward events, all which are in the hands of the risen Christ, the Mediatorial King. So Wesley believed, that God could rouse England by him. So Morrison believed, that God was able to break down the stone wall of Chinese self-sufficiency. So John Woolman, the Quaker, believed that God could humble the slave-power of America. So George Müller counted on God giving him, through myriads of unknown channels, supplies for His orphans. They knew—they proved daily the powers of the risen Christ.

This reaching up to the power of His resurrection is emptied of all selfish glorification or any

selfish end. The idea that this power is at his disposal, only comes to the soul in deep oneness of mind with Christ, and in the hours when that oneness is realised; and what justifies to each consecrated soul the seeking and using of that power, is the deep and true conviction that he only wants it for Christ's glory. The passion of all such is to live as He lived, to be yielded up to God as He was, not to practise any reasonless asceticism, but to be ready for whatever might be necessary to vindicate the honour of God, and win the hearts of men, to know 'the fellowship of His sufferings' (iii. 10). Beyond every earthly ideal, or glory, or blessing, they want to be conformed to Christ's death, to be filled with His very mind in dying—with the priestly, holy love which animated Him on the cross, so that they may win an entrance into that Kingdom—to that very throne, where in Christ's saints as in Himself, that love shall eternally reign (iii. 10, 11).

There is the summit of the mountain, as it can, with many falls, be reached in time. Thus, to go back upon our former poor figure, is the cable of the human soul woven, strand by strand, into the heart and will of Christ, so that the power of Christ may pass over into it. This is the original

contribution of Christianity,—this renewed, decentralised, transfigured personality, in continual communion with Christ, who redeemed it, and in union with God through Christ. That this will tell for much, in every sphere into which it finds entrance, goes without saying. Our task is to show, briefly and popularly, how this renewed personality works in the sphere of society; and in what remains of this chapter we shall show how Paul approaches that subject.

We have had many studies of the Rome of Nero. Even fiction has aided history and biography, by elaborate literary reproductions of that epoch, which seems to more sober times one long nightmare of cruelty and lust. Not only had the early Christians no civil rights, or recognised place in the state; they were, or were very soon to be, in continual peril of life. Gathering by night in waste places, herding in slave quarters, their anxiety was to elude notice and remain invisible. Yet amid every variety of circumstances, the spiritual life goes on. Their pressing to the mark for the prize, is irrespective of all external well or ill. Yea, just because their life in the world was so cramped and held in the chains of such mortal fear, were they driven

in upon the unseen. Their citizenship was in heaven. The time of Christ's coming was at hand.

Manifestly, in this time of apprehension, when the apostle's one anxiety seemed to be to keep them patient, steadfast, trustful, there was no call to develop the bearings of this new personality on the various aspects of social duty. Yet even then social duties and relationships existed, to fellow-Christians, Jews, heathens. The Christian must be the Christian in everything. In every sphere open to him, he must discover the characteristic charms and power of the Christian spirit. And so, not at length but in one full glorious sentence, the apostle Paul sketches the social spheres, and the spirit in which the child of God should enter them: 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things' (iv. 8, R. V.).

This was done so simply, as to meet the circumstances in which Paul, and Pomponia Græcina, and they of Cæsar's household, and

Epænetus, and Apelles would find themselves. But Paul knew that the kingdom would not always be in such a case. He saw the forces of the flesh yielding to Christ, avenues of power and use beyond all present thought, opening before the redeemed. And even beyond what he, with the utmost stretch of imagination, could discern,

> 'Feeling for foothold through a blank profound,
> Along with unborn people in strange lands,'

the Holy Spirit, working in him, discerned. With a divine originality, he marks the social spheres so as to attain two fundamental ends, the order in which the Christian spirit moves out into them, and to map out the circuit of social duty. In these brief outlines we are carried far deeper than in the ordinary social surveys, discerning the welling up of the Christian spirit from within,—altering the very strata of life, as well as rising in particular effects. We can see the forces of the Christian spirit, all working in certain characteristic lines to specific results, modified by, yet modifying, circumstances, attaining to enlarged expression, with the growth of the spiritual consciousness, and according to the new openings of providence,—a living power gathering momentum

with the gathering years, and mounting in ever-fresh forms to meet the vaster exigencies of later times.

There is another idea in this classification beyond what we have expressed. It was a marvellous thought for Paul, to believe and assert, that wherever the Christian might come, into whatever variety of outward circumstance, into whatever social problem or puzzling relationships, —yet as a Christian, in virtue of the light he carried, by the spirit which animated him, he would find his bearings, and discover a clear line of consistent action. But for a Jew born, it may be, in Tarsus, but nurtured in Jerusalem, it was wonderful, exceedingly, that he should see,—in a true cosmopolitanism,—that the Christian could never come across any real virtue, any action or course worthy of praise, that, from the Christian standpoint, he could not assimilate. From the higher level of communion with God, it would be his to interpret the dim vaticinations of heathen minds, to read a soul of meaning in common human aspirations; and to carry them to higher ground and give them vaster sweep, in connection with Christian civilisation.

In the two following chapters, we shall open

up the teaching of this singularly comprehensive utterance—so far as to define in two main directions its scope; and then in the chapters comprising Part II. we shall illustrate the working of the potencies of Christian character in these varied spheres, bringing the whole to a conclusion with some practical reflections as to the most fruitful lines of Christian teaching and discipline at the present time.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL POTENCIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

If what has been taught in the preceding chapters be true, the words in Phil. iv. 8 are worthy of most attentive study. They sketch in brief, a new beginning in the life of this world. The mightiest force which has ever moulded human society, and is still moulding it to undreamt-of issues, was in an age of opprobrium and universal decay, emerging from the midst of a feeble folk held in universal contempt, and from a world of thought, utterly foreign to every known school of heathen opinion in that time. We had better note what these words do not affirm, as well as their positive assertions, and at what point and in what form the social question emerges. Indeed, we must neglect nothing which will differentiate the Christian position from other social philosophies, and present this region of truth, within the limitations, and in the distinctive glory and power, which mark it off from the unaided wisdom of men.

As we brood in silent thought on this problem, till the whole situation, fronting Paul, rises before us, from our vantage-ground of eighteen centuries, we can see, in the restraints laid upon these early teachers, no less than in their positive assertions, the marks of a Divine Wisdom. A universal religion, especially one so fertilising to human thought, and so productive of progress, could take no other line. We have no enunciation of specific social theory, no committal of the uninstructed throngs in apostolic churches to distinctive social and political action, much less any ukase or manifesto securing the Christian strength for any political interest; yet with all this wise reticence, if there had not been in the Kingdom of Christ a wisdom higher than that of the world, she would have compromised herself again and again beyond retrieval.

Let the reader cast back his memory over the eighteen centuries, and recall the numberless and very diversified relations into which the Church has come, to all sorts of rulers and every variety of civil polity. Let him remember, too, how she herself has changed amid these constantly changing circumstances,—her manifold and enormous developments, her modifications of outward forms,

her ever-widening conceptions of duty, and the uncountable variety of her public tasks and activities. What conceivable statutes could have provided for the healthful and unfettered mutual action of divine and human, spiritual and civil, through all these past and the remaining centuries. Even at the present moment, what social and political code could be drawn up, equally applicable to the duty, and intercourse, and social activities, of Christians, in Britain, in Russia, among African braves, and in the Turkish Empire.

Very definite in doctrine, bearing on the soul's relation to God, Christianity leaves a wonderful liberty to the new spirit of brotherhood which it brought out into the world. There is allowed to the Christian character, freedom to judge, and act, and influence, according to the emergencies of each place and time. And this not by default, but of express principle. Christianity works not by regimentation, but by character. It carries down into society a personal life rooted in the unseen, with new horizons, new standards, above all a new spirit. The salt arrests corruption and imparts fresh savour. The light shines, reflected from the organised life of the Church, and directly

in the illumination of character by the Holy Ghost. And so on all social levels, within all systems of human society, amid all degrees of liberty and enlightenment, Christianity works a pervasive leaven, a steady, unfailing, lifting influence, felt at every point of the social organism.

We can now discern, in the very plane on which these great words of Paul move, a singular wisdom. The Christian is not to go a-tilting at all sorts of social windmills. His primary responsibility lies elsewhere, to maintain, through ever-growing fellowship with Christ, communion with God. If in any time of persecution or tyranny, the external call of opportunity to deal with social questions is denied, responsibility ceases. Although even in such times, when civilised life is utterly in abeyance, special emergencies arise, which bring the confessor and martyr with magnificent effect into the field of public conduct. In general, however, our responsibilities arise as our opportunities come. Without seeking of their own, because of incidents in the life of their community or controversies agitating their nation, Christians find themselves involved, let us suppose, in a question of truth, raising some broad issue of principle. Or in a situation of great complexity, they are

driven to ask what would be honourable conduct, or where lie the limits of relative rights. In the providence of God the circumstances arise; and as they arise and where they arise, in their every bearing of cause, and exterior conditions, and consequences, they have to be settled.

But to advance and reach at once the main point. When the circumstances have arisen; when the issue of principle is raised; when he is driven to ask what is the course of honour in the Christian sense, or what rights he must concede—in such and similar cases how is he to act? Here we come to the originality of the utterance. Paul points to no external rule, but turns the man in on himself. 'Whatsoever things are true, etc.—let him think of these things.' Of course he has the facts of his redeemed experience, the great ethical law of love, what he himself has come to see, in the imitation and fellowship of Christ. But for the particular application of these, in the infinite diversity of circumstances, he is thrown in upon his sanctified judgment, illumined by the Spirit of God. Nor is there the slightest misgiving on his part, that any possible circumstances might arise, in which a Christian judgment should be at fault.

Let us try to get into the current of Paul's feeling no less than his thought. 'Whatsoever things are true, etc.,' whatever matter for decision in any of these spheres comes up before you, do not put it away from you. Seize upon it. Occupy the sphere of opportunity which is thereby providentially open to you. Bring the matter up into the light of a Christian judgment, to the test of a conscience saturated with God's Word, and in hourly contact with Christ. 'Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things which pertain to this life?' (1 Cor. vi. 3). The conclusion at which we arrive may be tentative and incomplete. Still limited judgments, when they are sincere, often strike closer home, than those that are more abstract and general. Christ wants to touch men, to rouse them, to stir the hunger for better things, to awaken the dormant sense for good and God, by forces level to their comprehension, and close to their hearts. The limitations and one-sidedness in each will be corrected by others, and in the general advance from age to age.

There is a physiological theory which has exerted a profound influence on the study of living creatures, for the last sixty years. It is

called the cell-theory. According to this doctrine, all animal or vegetable structures are built up of minute cells. This minute, mostly microscopic, object is a highly complex corpuscle, with cell-wall, nucleus, etc. Every tissue is but an aggregate of such cells, 'and every organism subsists only by means of the reciprocal action of the single elementary parts.'[1] From these minute centres of force, in their actions and reactions, all living creatures have developed, taking shape under pressure of external conditions, in the struggle for existence. And the living creation, in both branches, has been so mobile, capable of endless variety, and innumerable forms of beauty and strength, because built up from these vital units.

And in like manner the great organism of Christian civilisation, in infinite variety of manifestation, on many planes, within innumerable circles of influence, and developing right round the sphere of human interest, amid the widening opportunities of successive ages, is not the result of a cast-iron social scheme, but the slow formation of vital units of consecrated character, in all the spiritual men and women who have con-

[1] See Thomson's *Science of Life*, 103.

tributed to the social progress of mankind. In the spiritual sphere, Paul saw, eighteen hundred years ago, that all true progress is bio-centric, from living centres outward, the same truth which Schleiden and Virchow discerned, with regard to animal and vegetable life, in recent times. In both spheres, the old conception of a great network of abstract law imposed upon matter and spirit, has given place to the more vital and original thought, of resilient units of force working from within to a living creation.

There gathers round Paul's simple words, accordingly, a dignity, a marvellous originality. A depth of vision is discoverable not only in their brevity but in their form. The cell, as the life-centre of every organism, is a work of marvellous skill. Pent up in its narrow compass are the forces, by whose interaction the life of the whole is sustained. These cells are so built, that they work unfailingly in certain directions. The renewed soul is God's spiritual unit, built up, as we have seen, with wonderful care, having stored up original forces which, if they are not neutralised, will act out in specific lines. 'Let him think of these things,' says the apostle. Let this life have full honest play on every matter. The Christian

is not in a condition of pupilage; in the exercise of Christian wisdom, he must decide each question on its merits. Far better that whatever forces flow into society, should be the unforced expressions of genuine conviction, however limited or one-sided they may be. One gleam of real good has an incalculable worth. The quiet love that steals forth in the aroma of kindly deeds; the tender conscience that educates by its shrinking, yet resolute, utterance to a finer moral sensibility; the purity that rebukes grossness as by the stroke of a sword; the self-sacrifice that melts and subdues; these are worth waiting for and waiting for long. When they come, they are creative as light, new positive constituents of human thought and feeling, to which the race will slowly grow up, from which, amid all convulsions, men will never wholly go back or fall away.

From all which we gain a further lesson, as to this new force of spiritual character. Not only does it grow up into Christ,—every fibre of faculty inwoven with the will and person of Christ,—but thus rooted, and drawing the riches of the divine nature into itself, the renewed soul has a heightened power of adaptation, and develops faculties to meet every variety of human

circumstance and need. Of course natural individuality, and the diversities of gift and aptitude obtaining among men, underlie and mightily aid this spiritual development. But the Christian spirit, the forces characteristic of this new spiritual unit, carry this development to degrees and regions that are new. The general potency of renewed life develops specific aptitudes of spiritual service. The original divine endowment of the pound becomes through usury ten pounds, giving rise to faculties of prayer, of sympathy, of teaching, of administration, and so forth.

And over and above the common blossoming of gifts for common ends, providential circumstances bring into every life some distinguishing note of power, by which that life stands out on a vantage-ground of moral influence. A fallen friend kindles in one, a burning passion for social reform. A personal sorrow and bereavement consecrate and liberate John Bright for a public career. Sometimes a seeming chance circumstance directs an obscure and humble life, into the sphere in which it wins unlimited notoriety and influence. One has but to fall back in quiet thought, and survey the circuit of one's observation and

knowledge, in this regard, to discern, in what to many seems the fortuitous concourse of circumstances, an elaborate discipline of personality, what we might call a gymnasium of the human spirit. Looking at the great crystal column of the fountain, breaking at top into the capricious spray of foam, and floating spray, and clashing rain, one forgets the pressure upon every drop in that ascending stream, to produce that result. And so men do not realise the energy of consecrated character being spent, every day, in arresting evil, in shaming vice into secrecy, in maintaining a high standard of public virtue, in checking misdirections of vanity, or licence, or prurient curiosity; and in maintaining lofty traditions of social service, the full play of generous impulse, and self-sacrificing devotion to the common good, which mark the life of our great civic communities. Yet though many secondary influences contribute to that result, which, in the persons originating them, cannot be directly identified with Christian character and the Christian spirit, yet are they borne on in great social currents, which Christian character set in motion, and these continue vital, dominant, irresistible, because of the innumerable

pulses of Christian character still supporting them.

And yet we have not formed anything like an adequate idea of these potencies,—the expansive, and multiplying, and resilient energies of those units of spiritual character,—which are the tissue-building forces of Christian civilisation. Many thinkers speak and write, as if our religion had superinduced some new altruistic feelings and customs, upon the stable and radically unchanged principles and institutions of human society. They fail to recognise, how largely these units of spiritual character, working not alone, but in natures the products of their time, have changed the foundations of that society. Magnificent in the details of her organisations, that old civilisation which Christianity superseded was dying for lack of principles and ideals. The Christian, living in a new world, fired with spiritual ideals, and surrendered to principles having not only the moral sanction of right, but the sacredness of religion—in the measure in which he influenced the family, society, and the state, undergirt them with new conceptions, which eliminated much, modified much, and permeated with a new spirit all that remained.

Every one admits, that when the hulk of that old civilisation was breaking up, and great deluges of savage invasion, sent the disrupted fragments adrift, to clash against and confound each other in one universal ruin, the centripetal force that drew them together again was the Church and Kingdom of Christ. But the fact that the arrested rupture became not a mere reconstitution, but a transformation, and issued in new social growths that, whatever their defects, carried within them the possibilities of higher developments, was owing not merely to some administrative pope, or new ecclesiastical machinery. It arose from the circumstance that what breasted the forces of decay and convulsion was a force of incorruptible hope in every living Christian, which nothing could deflect or daunt, which saw in all sorrow an opportunity of service, which could lay hold on a Stronger than the strongest in every convulsion, which discerned beyond present wrong, the promise of a larger right, and served the ideal, bringing forth blossoms of beauty, laying foundations for better things to be, amid the ruins of the past.

And in this connection, looking at the problem of Christian history from this individualistic

standpoint, we find great interest even in those growths of Christian character which failed to perpetuate themselves, which proved one-sided, or lacking in essential elements. Every writer of primers can tell us, how chivalry degenerated, and why the Crusades failed, and on account of what monasticism, despite a series of splendid beginnings, grew to be a moral nuisance. But the potencies of character which found expression in these movements, judged by the standards of the past, reveal, with whatever misjudgment, new Christian elements of singular beauty and force. Those were not so much blunders as beginnings, containing precious elements, living and to live in the kingdom of God, but mingled in these particular movements with crudities and corruptions, which led to their defeat.

Then, because the units of force are those expansive, multiplying, resilient energies of sanctified character, they refuse to acquiesce in failure. They produce reactions of conviction and trust and sacrifice, originating new ideals and resolves, preparing the way for new days of power and opportunity, long before they have begun to dawn. For instance, the absolutism of the papacy, crushing in so many directions the master instincts of

Christian character, stirred thinkers to formulate the inherent rights of civil government, as a *dominium* given by God; threw mystics back on personal fellowship with God; and in a word, raised up many to prepare the foundations of that Reformation movement, in which clearer consciousness of our more direct communion with God in Christ, introduced Christian character not merely to an increased number, but to a new plane of social activities, creating modern civilisation.

Nor is the task of these social potencies of the Christian character yet accomplished. The whole tone of thought in the present day, the influences good and bad at work in the world, the massing of humanity into ever-enlarging aggregates, the command of material resources on a wholly unprecedented scale, the communities of thought and feeling growing up among the workers of all nations, the opportunities for mutual comparison and stimulus through the daily press—all these and many other circumstances, which might be mentioned, point forward to vaster social problems than we have yet seen. And in grappling with these, Christian character, in the whole range of the potencies, maintained and developed

by the Holy Spirit within the soul, will be taxed as never before, in the effort to breathe into these a Christian spirit, mould them to moral uses, and compel them to subserve the highest ends of the kingdom of God.

Mayhap, in the counsels of Him who sees the end from the beginning, Christians are being led to look at the subject of Christianity in relation to the social life of the world, that, with God's blessing and by His direction, they may mass their resources, gather up the fragments of waste energy, and eliminate unproductive elements. Mayhap they are being drawn, from the multiplied distinctions of the past, to unite in simpler surrender and fuller consecration round the Divine fountains of power, receiving, while they meditate and pray, a fresh baptism of the self-oblivious and self-obliterating love of the crucified Christ!

CHAPTER V

THE SPHERES OF SOCIAL DUTY

BUT one task remains, before we proceed, in the second part, to an illustrative treatment of the working of these potencies in the actual life of the world. How does the apostle classify the spheres of social duty? Here we have a remarkable depth and originality, corresponding to the profound view which Paul has given of the redeemed personality,—brought into wonderful oneness and communion with God in Christ, and educated (in the school of experience) into manifold potencies of social service.

At this point we discern, from his view of duty, what is evident enough in his doctrinal teaching, that Paul takes the profoundest view of the place and work of Christianity. Our religion is a new spirit breathed into existence —not however as something brought in from without, but as a discovery from within of the essential meaning of all existence, at once in its

original and end. The coiners of the new-fangled word altruism, and men like the late Professor Huxley, hold that life is a struggle for existence. The law of living things is ceaseless conflict, in which the weakest goes to the wall, and the strong or well-advantaged perpetuate themselves. However, when these teachers come up to the level of man as a moral being, they find, as Huxley taught in the *Romanes Lecture*, that this law of merciless self-assertion would never suffice. Human intelligence brings in, even in a selfish interest, another principle, a benevolent interest in others, in order to conserve the moral gains of all the ages, and secure their perpetuation.

With that clumsy patchwork, in which man comes in to save Nature from a kind of ethical suicide, Christianity in Paul's view has nothing to do. This new Spirit is *not* something imposed upon existence, but the discovery of the central soul of all existence. To change the figure, the bed-rock of this universe is neither matter nor force, but personality. And in Christ, the self-existent Personality, in and by whom all worlds and orders of being exist, stands self-discovered in His spirit, purpose, and end. And more, in Christ, men come into union with that Personality,

by the marvellous blending of individualities, which at length we described. In this personal union, then, we are at the centre of knowledge as of life. The reason for the existence of the material creation; the general purposes underlying its scope and forms, its appearances and processes; the rationale of history, and the explanation of the mysteries of existence;—all lie in that unveiling of His essential end, given by God, in connection with the incarnation and atonement of His Son. That is the divine, essential truth, on which all other true things, which have been called into existence to give effect to His purpose, hang.

(i.) Christianity not only brings a new creation to the soul, but introduces the renewed soul into a new world, or rather into the old world put upon altered foundations. Everything stands related to God's purpose in Christ; and anything within that vast circuit may affect our endeavour to fulfil this spiritual purpose. Our horizon, then, is no more confined than the purpose of God discovered in His universe. The foundation on which He stands with us is a foundation of truth; and the only foundation on which we can stand before Him is one of truth. 'WHATSOEVER

THINGS ARE TRUE,' says Paul. We stand committed as Christians to a particular view of the meaning and end of all existence, and we must vindicate that in every court of reason. We are thrown upon the waves of a never-ceasing controversy, and are compelled to uphold not only the legitimacy, but the reality, and the supremacy, of the spiritual conception of the universe, given us in Christ.

Verily, Christ came 'not to send peace on earth but a sword,' but in nothing has He put a greater honour on His truth and His people. In no age of her history has the Church of God been an exotic, growing apart in a sequestered spot. She has mingled with all thought as with all life. She has been in the heart of all the most vital controversies. And from the conflict of rival intelligences, she has won a clearer consciousness of her own great principles, and has seen them in sharper definition, from those which were opposed.

Only gradually has the Church entered,—if even to-day she realises to the full—the greatness of this position. In the early centuries Christian thinkers realised vividly the supremacy of the spiritual view over all subordinate fields of know-

ledge. But because of the strong ecclesiastical feeling which marked those centuries, and especially the identification of Western Christianity with one specific organisation, that unquestioned truth of the supremacy of the spiritual became confounded with another, and very different, and really false, assumption. Ecclesiastics aspired to control all spheres of knowledge—science, philosophy, government, economics. It took centuries to overthrow these pretensions, where they are overthrown. At this very hour, the Catholics want a university in Ireland, where a priest-controlled science and philosophy shall be taught. They cannot trust their sons to the unfettered influence of truth.

The whole conception, however, on which this spiritual tyranny in the sphere of the intellect is based, is a materialisation and depravation of a great unquestionable principle. The authority of the spiritual, is the authority of truth. Coming into union with God in Christ, we have discovered the master-relation of God, to all the fields of His working. Here is the clue to the divine purpose and end of the whole. The various kingdoms of truth, however particular and subordinate they may be, are His, no less than the

spiritual, in which He has discovered His own relation to all. If we would know the glorious fulness of the divine purpose, these kingdoms must be studied freely and reverently, in the light which they bring, according to the laws by which they have been built up. And so the spirit of religious reverence, is the spirit of true science, 'man knows and knows only what he observes.' In every kingdom of material nature, in the science of soul, in metaphysics, in all branches of social philosophy, the supreme interest is, what is the truth as discovered by the most exact means of research.

Recognising these undoubted truths, the leading thinkers of recent centuries have gone in an opposite direction to that of the early Church. Giving these kingdoms of truth their undeniable rights, they have deemed it lawful, to rule the spiritual out of many spheres. They have most unwarrantably confined the spiritual to the realm of the conscience and will, as a species of soul-discipline or mystic absorption in the divine. That can only be done, however, by mutilating the Christian creed, and emasculating the Christian spirit. The Christian has to do with all truth, because he is spiritually related to

Him who is the Original of all truth; and his destiny is included in a world-purpose, which embraces it all. He cannot alter the facts which come up to him from the lower spheres. At times they may seem to be opposed, to the meaning and end of existence as discovered in God's purpose, revealed through Christ. The spiritual, however, stands on its own order of facts and experiences, and cannot be ruled out by the material, any more than the material by the spiritual. Truth must triumph. And a hundred times, extreme material theories have given way, and the latest researches have discovered, a marvellously developed harmony between nature and the divine.

> 'Earth by heaven and heaven by changeful earth
> Illustrated and mutually endeared.'

And all this is not only a concern for truth, but for religion. Quite independently of theories, the Church, for very life's sake, has had to go into questions of truth, against contrary opinions of heathen, and half-instructed Christian, and alien thinkers. At the very time when the apostles were writing, the Christians were exercised about man, his inherent worth, what was due to him what was inconsistent with his nature and destiny

and found themselves traversing opinions in many fields most surely believed by the heathen around. A short while after, confronting the dreams of the gnostics, they had to think out a doctrine of creation, satisfying to the facts of their Christian experience, as well as to such natural knowledge as they possessed.

And what has occupied the Christian peoples through past centuries, is with even greater intensity occupying us to-day. With what anxious and long-continued conflict, have Christian men, in perfect loyalty to natural fact, but also concerned to maintain spiritual reality, fought for a view of this material universe as subject to law, which yet allowed the free action of God in providence, and the unfettered outpouring of the spiritual life in prayer. And at this moment, are not thinkers reshaping our political economy, lifting it up from a purely selfish and material basis, and introducing those ethical principles and considerations, which may bring it into line with a Christian view of life?

Enough, mayhap, has been stated, to show the magnificence of this sphere, in which the renewed character is called to exercise itself. The victory of Christianity is not an isolated triumph, but the

bringing of all truth, as of all life, under law to Him. And now it is worth while remarking, ere we pass to the second element in this classification, that peculiar interest attaches to this line of thought at the present hour. Men are coming to see that not below, in matter, but above in Personality, have we the fountain of existence,—the synthesis that brings the whole world of being in its boundless diversity, into unity of source and aim. The soul of this universe is not material necessity, but ethical Purpose—personal Will.

(ii) So much, then, for the first category, that of the true. When we leave the region of fact for that of conduct, we find an equal profundity and justness of view. We have no abstract theories, undergirding some peculiar views of right. Paul founds upon facts of life and experience, and so he sees the problem of social conduct in the true light, and takes up the parts of that problem in the proper order.

Every man is born into, and—the period of infancy past—wakens up to find himself in, a network of relations. He owes existence and all the boons of existence, to parents, friends, teachers, rulers, and so out into ever-widening circles of help and influence, covering past as well as

present—those who have vanished as those who remain. In order of actual experience, then, a man's first problem is not his rights, but his duties. He finds his feet in this universe, he rises or falls in the scale of moral being, according to the spirit in which he meets these obligations, and seeks to discharge them. He takes rank, as a contributory to the well-being of the race, in that measure. And therefore the problem of what is due to him—of his own personal rights—arises out of this earlier problem.

All that is true on the ground of nature, and quite apart from Christianity. But human selfishness has so forced human conduct aside from its natural course, that for millions, the question of right has been obliterated, and the law of the strong arm, the doctrine that might is right, has taken its place. And where, in reaction against the desolations of unbridled power, men have reasserted the right, it has been in a maimed, stunted, and half-articulate form. They have built a kind of party-wall, rudely composed, at the spurring of necessity, of all sorts of materials, to keep out the deluge. Thus we have rights of possession, rights of prescription, rights having protection of positive statute,—but without any

ground of principle or foundation of real right underlying them.

To have struck in with a new all-resolving principle of real right into the thickets of human statute, would simply have brought about at once the universal overturn. Besides, that is not the proper order. Rights are the issues or consequences of discharged obligations. Christ leaves those questions of mutual right to rectify themselves, and brings in a new, loftier, more refined, and all-encompassing sense of obligation. He thus leads men back, on a higher plane, to the original and true idea of life, as in debt for obligations received, and as bound to loftier traditions of social service, from which would spring larger, more human, and more fundamental conceptions of right.

'WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE HONOURABLE,' says, and more justly, the Revised Version. The Christian is bound not merely to honesty, but to a high and scrupulous sense of honour, because of the great sacrifice of free love offered for Him. In the highest interests of men, against their corrupt and degraded self-will, Christ gave Himself that it might be possible for them to reach the ideal good for which they were made. In

receiving this priceless blessing, Christians were brought under a new ethical standard for themselves. The very seeing of this lofty good in Christ compelled them to imitate it. Obligation to others for benefit received, and duty towards them, mount by equal steps. They were not to wait till honesty constrained. In a fine sense of honour, they were to show themselves forward, to discover and bind duty on themselves, for the sake of Him who did so much for them. His motives were to be sufficient for them,—opportunity being a reason for service and need an argument. This was the new Christian sense of honour, kindled in men by Christ, and occupying the whole sphere of conduct; not only to reaffirm the old supremacy of duty, but to carry the soul forward to a higher and completer service of man.

(iii) And springing from this sense of honour, so swift to realise duty to others, on account of service received, came the sense of right—the judgment of what was due to the worker because of service. Instead of mere legal and prescriptive senses of right, there grew up the far deeper and only true conception of right, arising from, and existing according to the measure and kind of service; and with this came a positive personal

desire to realise what heart and conscience felt to be just in every relation. There began to exist and develop a moral life of society, beyond the sweep of military power or the civil arm. 'WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE JUST' became a concern to each individual Christian.

And not only in the narrow sense of conforming to legal obligation. Christ's large conception of loving service to His people woke a sense of honour as to what was due to Him and to all men for His sake. A whole new world of rights, in the eye of love, rose before them; since, as unworthy they were loved, misery became a claim, blindness an obligation. They must seek to draw those for whom Christ died, and help to better things, those whom God made capable of a great destiny. They must pay to posterity the great heritage they have received from their ancestors. In every field, under the spirit of Christianity, the recognised rights of men are multiplying, being freely conceded, or stoutly fought for, on grounds of duty that have their root in the spirit of Christ. In this sense, there is not a human being on earth, perhaps, who has not in some sort, felt the touch of Christ,—in vanished slaveries and slave-trades, which civilised nations considered

that it was due to them to repress; in the extirpation of savage cruelties; in the reduction of tribal wars; in the introduction of a primitive sense of order or of a rudimentary knowledge. Ambition may pervert and degrade this world-subduing spirit, but never originate it. A sense of duty to the race, of rights in men our brothers, which we recognise and try to meet, is prompting the self-denying actions of thousands, on the frontier lines of civilisation.

> 'Take up the white man's burden,—
> In patience to abide
> To veil the threat of terror
> And check the show of pride,
> By open speech and simple
> An hundred times made plain,
> To seek another's profit
> And work another's gain.'

(iv) What magnificent spheres are these which open before the Christian personality—the sphere of the true, the sphere of conduct, the sphere of relative rights! What an education for the Christian character in meeting and solving all the problems rising in these three fields! Because of relations to God, and under pressure of obligation to Him, the Christian comes in as a free man, to realise the highest ideal of good

along every possible line, in every sphere. For all this social activity, he owns a divine authority, and may draw upon a divine power. The inertia and disintegrating power of self, has given way to an opposite force of love.

And so the Christian comes, in a thoroughly original way, into a sphere which has never been so occupied in any other system: 'WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE PURE.' There is something in God, and in human nature, when Christ has revealed its original brightness, which is not resolvable into obligation or rights,—the appetency of a personality for another personality, which we call love. In love, obligation and rights are subsumed, but love is greater than they. Moved from within by a subtle feeling, which is nothing to those who have not felt, and everything to those who have, the man crowns the beloved object, not only with all his possessions, but with his entire self, transfigured in the giving to something far more precious than he had ever known in himself before. And the beloved object takes all those possessions which were dearer than life,—parents, friends, home, mastery of herself, liberty, honour —and sacrifices them, as if they were nothing, on the altar of love.

That—degraded often, continually perverted and turned into the eating cancer of unutterable pollution—is nevertheless, the breaking forth in man, of that which is most truly sovereign and original in God. And in Christ, the revealer of God, we see what this union may become. In His own infinite sacrifice for man, He has invested human nature with an immeasurable worth. Crowned with such a destiny, the object of a divine affection so intense, each human soul, to a reverent man, is sacrosanct. He can have, and use that love, only in harmony with that higher allegiance. And so, something new in the life, of the world, has come to permeate the relation of the sexes,—a spirit of purity,—which, working from the centre of this realm of feeling, has done more than aught else to elevate the social life of mankind.

Right through all this classification, we have been ringing the changes on one central thought —personality, with its moral and spiritual creation of character. The world of conduct is the world of personal relations, into which we enter, and where we find ourselves, as we discharge the duties arising out of these relations, discovering thus our own place, and function, and rights, and

the rights of others to us. But the efflorescence of personality is in that crowning act,—the whole being losing itself to another, and finding itself in another—as bringing a lofty unselfishness into life, reinforcing all the other impulses which we have described.

(v) Now, because this world is a world of personality, beauty attaches to it,—to everything in human emotions and relations, and to the world in which these are being evolved. And so the next sphere into which the Christian character is led, both as a creator and a recipient, is that of the beautiful: 'WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE LOVELY.' Though further removed from the stern actualities of life, this is not an unreal sphere for the potencies of Christian character. The material is the shadow of the spiritual, nature is a mirror of things divine, a prophecy of things to be. In architecture, in sculpture, in art, in poetry, the Christian spirit has taken forms of consummate beauty, which have set up new ideals for imitation, and profoundly influenced millions of mankind. And still through the beautiful in character, achievement, sacrifice; through art helping the soul to a larger consciousness of itself; and through

nature playing with a thousand subtle touches on every sensibility, the human soul is receiving an education of passing worth.

(vi) Bishop Lightfoot tells us that instead of the phrase 'of good report,' we should read 'fair speaking' or 'winning and attractive.' Whatever reading we adopt, we are brought into a new sphere of vast importance. We have been emphasising the conception of Personality. We have been showing how Christian character has been drawn out, into great variety of activity, in these related social spheres, developing numerous gifts or potencies, and so becoming richer, fuller, and more commanding from age to age. And so a new result appears. While on the one hand everything is of God in the Kingdom of Christ, and man is in the dust as a recipient of grace, yet on the other hand surrender leads to possession of consecrated character and influence. The forces of human personality are raised to higher powers. The Kingdom of God is being made visible in Christian men. The world's centre of gravity has shifted from the throne of the despot, and the closet of the oligarchy, to the free conflict of opinion and conviction in modern democracies. And the Christian character comes into this

sphere of free personal conviction and opinion, to set an ideal, to discover new possibilities of human nature, and draw WHATSOEVER THINGS ARE WINNING, OR OF GOOD REPORT, into their real relation with the complete truth in Christ.

(vii) But in this great classification, we have still a division, or indeed two, the contemplation of which fills us with admiration. Paul was no zealot, but one of the calmest and most sober thinkers that the world has ever seen. He saw that for many a day, Christianity would cover a section, and a very small section, of the world. Other systems and rules of life would command a far greater allegiance. Was Christianity, then, in its principles of individual and social conduct, to affect a cloistered and exclusive wisdom? So far from that, as it aimed to bring the world over to the Christian standpoint, so must each soul, carrying forward this mission, come into sympathy with every gleam of good, generous aspiration, and glint of reality in the outfield of the world. These are fragments of the truth, discovered in royal completeness by Christ. The Christian personality is to play round them, permeating them with a finer spirit, born of a purer faith, and then eliminate alien elements, before giving

them harbourage, with kindred truth in the beliefs of Christian men.

But the vision of the great apostle went further still. Paul is not content to say, 'IF THERE BE ANY VIRTUE—think on these things.' There are, in the civilised life of nations from age to age, ever arising to shape particular eras, ideals, and ambitions, not purely moral, nor yet exclusively material, but containing elements from both sides and from all the regions lying between. Paul describes these in the phrase 'IF THERE BE ANY PRAISE, etc. Into those ideals or ambitions the intellectual capital of these several ages is poured. These are the praise or boast of their times. Thus the revival of letters was the passion of one age, maritime discovery the glory of another, the religious rights of conscience the battle-cry of a third, popular education the task of a fourth. And Paul foresaw that Christianity in the renewed personalities of its followers, would be in the heart of all these movements, whether they had a Christian origin, or sprang from humanist, or even hostile, tendencies. If there be any popular enthusiasm, whencesoever originating —*think*, say to yourself, human conviction is going into this. Men who are made in the image of God

are looking in this direction. It cannot but be that the revelation which came forth from Him in whom men live and move, should have some relation to this, some principle or guiding which might find out the healthy aims which underlie the movement, and turn them to lasting good for the race.

PART II

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AT WORK IN THE SOCIAL SPHERES

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINALITY OF THIS INFLUENCE

THE reader, we think, can now judge of the relation of the social forces of Christianity to its immediate aim—the bringing of men to God, and the building up of the brotherhood of the redeemed into an eternal kingdom of holy fellowship and loving service. That is of God, came from God, lives by the continual grace of God, moves in the power of God, and in essential elements continues unchanged, amid all changes of place and time.

In every age, rash and unholy hands have been thrust forth to seize this ark of the world's hopes, and to use it for the service of immediate human schemes. But risen anew, generation by generation, in the redeemed consciousness of multitudes, the religion of Christ stands on foundations of its own, inviolable as light, unapproachable as the stars, living by a power from beyond the bourne of time, incapable of decay or eclipse.

This we would do well to remember, when the social impulse, working on an unprecedented scale, seeks to organise life, on principles of equality, for utilitarian ends. The servants of this impulse may take it into their heads, that they can exploit the church on these principles for these ends. We have been hearing from some, whom we account friends, talk about a civic church, as if we might have a vastly extended Christian union, by simply eliminating the distinctively Christian basis. That is a natural gas, which may serve as a temporary illuminant, for souls whose enthusiasm is vastly in excess of clear vision. But such teachers are giving a lead to others, who may use the idea, with far more serious purpose, and truly disastrous consequences.

Multitudes, who ten years ago were sure that they were going to eliminate the spiritual, have learned a lesson in the interval. The Church is here to stay. It is their creed which has been found inadequate, for the nutriment of life and the sustenance of society. The factors of human nature, which they set out to ignore, have turned out to be real—far more real than their surface theories. And the societies which have vindicated their reality, and met their spiritual cravings, are

mounting into ever-greater ascendency, and can push, and have pushed to the wall, their pallid and pulseless speculations. What if they now resolve, since they cannot crush the Church, and the human organisations which live by her inspiration, to utilise them, turning them into social machines, for higher social ends? This will involve the elimination or depreciation to vanishing point of the supernatural and doctrinal elements, that all good citizens may meet on the common ground of social sympathies and public service.

If we are right in our forecast and apprehensions, that may turn out a searching trial to the Church of Christ. The social fruits of faith may be used, as an argument against the faith which gave them birth. Many may be tempted, for the sake of the immense prestige arising from recognition and establishment of the new social state, to travel far in the direction of eliminating positive doctrine, and the reference, in faith and prayer, to an exclusive divine authority. Every living soul will be thrown into the furnace of a great decision. The sons of God, however—those who by grace have been brought into living union with God—can have no option. The religion of Christ came forth from God. It stands and moves

in the grace and power of God. The nations of the saved must in the future, as in the past, defer in everything, yea, by positive supplication and intercession continually rise, to the Divine Will. The Gospel and Kingdom are to be received, not mastered, as a social machine. We make them known to all men for the obedience of faith.

One wild winter in Scotland, a fierce hurricane strewed with ruin, one of the loveliest wooded regions in Perthshire. On hill-faces, and in patches of many acres embossing the plain, sometimes not a single tree would be left standing, or whole. What made the devastation so exceptionally complete, was that the trees were struck from a very uncommon quarter. They had all been fortifying themselves in one direction, to meet the prevailing wind, and when caught behind, they were unable to resist attack. For long centuries, the spirit of Jesus in Christian men, has been resisting individual selfishness, and social tyranny, and despotism of sovereigns and oligarchies, in the interests of the masses of the people. It will seem strange to many, then, that in the alleged interests of the same masses we cannot merge Christianity in a service of man, and simply use the law of Christian self-sacrifice

and brotherly love, as an engine against all social inequality, and on behalf of current schemes of communism. That we should keep standing on the distinctively Christian ground, and labour to convince of sin, and turn to God, and unite the converted and renewed in exclusive fellowships for sanctification and service, will seem to many, aflame with social enthusiasm and eager for immediate social results, a grievous coming short, a being tied to old formulas, a sacrifice of immediate good to Utopian dreams.

It is of great value, then,—mayhap we are not far enough as yet into the new situation to apprehend the value,—that such a view as we have been giving, should be put clearly and in detail before the reflecting Christian public. According to what we have seen, Christianity is left untouched, unlimited, unhampered in any way, on its own supernatural ground. And yet the social influence of Christianity is not an accident, something which has merely come in by the way: that is an inadequate and erroneous presentation of the case. The immediate effect of the religion of Christ is the creation of a new nature in the believer, which, rising on a foundation of self-surrender, is, in the way we described at length

in former chapters, being drawn into conformity with the will, and assimilated to the spirit of Christ. And this unit of consecrated character, like the atom or still more like the cell, is an organised force, created by God, and instinct with a heavenly life which must make itself felt in every sphere to which human influence can extend,—without in society and the state, no less than within in the Church. And the outward action of these potencies of Christian character, in social and public spheres, is not merely incidental, but an integral part of Christian duty and service. In the new Jerusalem, as all the inhabitants will be redeemed and holy, so all the organised activities of society, and government, will be on the spiritual plane. To speak in the language of time, the world will be within the Church. At present, however, we are living in two spheres, part of our activity being on the plane of the Spirit within the Church, and part on ordinary human levels, but of course in the power of the Spirit, with friends, neighbours, fellow-citizens, in the relations of everyday life. In both, however, the Christian has only one end, bringing the whole life of man into subjection to Christ, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

As you cannot have matter, characterised by the properties which mark the material substance of the universe, without atoms, as you cannot have living creatures,—animal and vegetable,—without living cells, from which they are built up; so you cannot have the public any more than the private fruits, the social more certainly than the spiritual creations of Christianity, without these units of consecrated character, — those social potencies, brought into existence by divine power, as their proximate causes. As soon expect a crop of wheat, without the wheat germs in the sown seed. Have we not seen stored up in the cause, the force which produced the effect? Yea, more exactly, have we not seen the human personality, decentralised, united to Christ, drawn out into surrender, caught up into vision of the divine,—in a word, so united in every strand of its individuality, with the Personality of Christ, that there passes through it into the life of the world, moments of a spiritual energy, which has no home or origin in the earthly sphere. To ignore, or discount that fundamental fact, or to suppose that you can reproduce, what is so original, by any human means, is the sort of irreverence which, when reduced to practice, becomes hideous folly.

While affirming this with profoundest earnestness, we do not of course forget that as force, in a swinging ball or a propelled body, transmits itself to the body it may strike against, so many catch up and pass on the influence of consecrated men, who are not themselves recipients of divine grace. There are no influences more capable of manifold transmission, than those which spring from living religion. Consecrated spirits have often a wholly human magnetism, so that those even who are not living by their light, will do homage to their greatness in deeds of sacrifice. Thus incarnated in movements, manifestos, struggles for liberty, efforts for reform, the consecrated zeal of spiritual men has often kindled a nation. So many truths have evolved themselves from central truth, so many associations entwine themselves around heroic, moral, or spiritual witness, such numerous effects flow, in sweetening and liberalising currents, from the smitten rock of principle, that multitudes are kept in touch, with profound social and moral issues, by these alone.

By multiplying reflectors in our closely-built business streets, you may carry light into many corners, which otherwise would be involved in gloom. But, as we need hardly aver, all the light

comes from the sun; and so, however many the angles from which spiritual light may be reflected and re-reflected, the vitality is from the original source. True, moral and social and personal impressions, once produced in human character, are more permanent than reflections of light, and so it happens that, even after the passing of the consecrated personality which kindled them, they for a season abide. If, however, they are not refreshed by renewed contact of a direct kind with God, they lose vitality, sicken into tradition, become effete, corrupt. Most of the abuses with which successive generations have had to contend, have been reflections or outcomes, of principles which have lost vital contact with the sources which gave them birth, and so have become dead, draining the energies of society, rather than making any helpful contribution.

Even in the interests, then, of the social progress of the race, it is of prime importance that we exalt the spiritual. The grand inimitable fruit of Christianity is the renewed man, in actual union with God, and in limited human measure, repeating something of the charm of the incarnation, by breathing a life begotten of

God and inspired with His Spirit. The Church which dies to self, in pouring forth such a stream of consecrated lives with the blessing of God, is the Church which will live in power, above the roaring cataracts of time, secure in her own supremacy, and providing for all spheres of society those who, breasting the evils of the world, will turn to issues of righteousness and good, the higher life of mankind. We are coming to a conflict of powers; and nothing but the power of God, in men, through whom (by the discipline of the divine life) it has become an abiding, operative presence and energy, can cast out the forces of the flesh and the evil one.

In thus exalting, however, the spiritual, and insisting on the distinctive sphere which it occupies, and the special mission which God set up His Church to fulfil, we are not separating this highest sphere from all the lower levels of life. The kingdom of Christ is set above the hills, that streams of influence may flow down into all the kingdoms of the world. This we have already seen to some extent in opening up the apostle's thought. He who holds of God, has relations with all that God has made. One with the Absolute True, in the realm of faith and life and love, the

Christian regards all truth as his province. Made alive through the infinite sacrifice of love, the Christian has won the master law of life in response to that sacrifice, and the key to the divine significance of all lower obligations and rights. And so on we might go, over ground trodden already more than once. Having now come, however, to the completion of our exposition of principles, there remains but to illustrate the working of these social potencies, in the varied spheres sketched out by the apostle.

Our aim in this is to suggest thought, rather than satisfy inquiry. Not one but a series of volumes would be required to illustrate the full influence of Christianity, through all the potencies she has created, within all the spheres sketched out by the genius of the apostle. We have had an extensive literature, within the last few years, on the reactive influence of heathen thought on Christian theology. But, what a literature would be required, to lay bare the moulding influence of Christian conceptions (in gradual development) upon the thought of Europe, in philosophy, science, art, government, law, education, social relations. Then take another theme,—the dynamic of the consecrated soul, in matters of personal

purity, working itself clear from the unimagined corruptions of heathenism, kindling new senses of modesty and reserve, breaking out into asceticism, blossoming into flowers of chivalric enthusiasm, and into the spiritual ardours of a Dante for Beatrice, and so working along many lines, to those relations of the sexes in Modern Europe, which have put woman on a level with man, as a rival in service, counting for half, in bearing the burdens of Christian civilisation, and the kingdom of God.

These mere openings into two spheres, may let us see what an extensive task it would be, exhaustively to cover, with adequate historical illustration, this great theme. But in lesser degree it may be worth while to glance at it, putting down such things as have specially impressed an individual observer in the working of these Christian potencies within the several spheres. There is a justness in the Christian spirit which neutralises opposing extremes, by supplying the lack of one with the fulness of the other. There is a catholicity in the Christian view, which carries us past partisan positions, to a higher platform. Besides, the matters with which we shall have to deal, are such as immediately concern us—truth,

duty, right, purity—which can as profitably be studied in the nearness of personal observation and incident, as well as from the altitudes of philosophic generalisation.

We commend these succeeding illustrations to the reader for what they are worth, sorry that for lack of time, and other lacks mayhap, we have not been able to make them more complete. And now, in drawing these introductory words to a close, we, who have been living with these thoughts for a long space, feel constrained to add two practical reflections. What so intricate, and so entirely beyond the most skilled powers of forecast, as the groupings of force and resultant lines of activity in a great civilisation! We slowly spell our way into them, and hardly have mastered them, till they have suffered an obliterating change. Whence can have come the wisdom which has enabled men, year by year, and generation by generation, in circumstances of enormous variety, marked not only by individual differences, but by vast secular change,—sometimes to meet dumb inarticulate needs of nations, in a reformation movement, sometimes to divine the one moment for striking a hoary wrong, sometimes to inaugurate a new departure, just

before the invisible conditions necessary to its realisation took shape and assumed prominence? Who has given Christian character, in its public activities, the secret of the psychological moment? Here we have another unnoticed, but very powerful, element of the Christian's influence. We have seen the marvellous formation of Christ-centred characters, the cells or living units of Christian civilisation. But remarkable though their inherent force may be, there have been situations again and again, in which the consecrated human personalities were simply the fingers which pressed the springs, the hands which established the contact. One higher than man had been working to bring great forces of thought and feeling into relation, which thenceforth moved on to foreseen issues. Luther's burning of the Pope's bull, simply fired the powder-train, which kindled to revolutionary expression, explosive forces that had been stored up, in all reverent souls and God-fearing communities over Europe. Christ is not only in His people but with them. 'His way is in the sea, His path in the great waters;' yet is He 'leading His people like a flock.'

All this being as we have stated, the Chris-

tian's danger, to be perpétually guarded against, —which, upon our knees, and in the searching study of Holy Scripture, we should seek a divine deliverance from—is the traditional, stereotyped, routine spirit, that runs in old grooves, and glorifies old divisions, and maintains partisan attitudes, and looks askance at the millions lying beyond. That is a real danger. What was precious in former times, was the mighty faith which led our fathers up to their advanced positions. What is precious for us is a similar loyalty, which at Christ's bidding will carry us beyond them. If we are in Him and living for Him, we cannot have too wide horizons. 'He is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Wherever, amid error and selfishness and wild fancy, there is a gleam of good, a flash of real discernment, in any hearts, that came not by chance. Our Lord ordered that blossoming, to bring men even by their vagrant inspirations to Himself. When this earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, where shall be our party walls, that cut us off from one another, and from the great heart of humanity? Drowned out of sight, like the lake-dwellings

of old Time. Let us live, then, in our Lord, for the future, which is even now present in His thought. 'I will wait for the Lord, who hideth His face, and I will look for Him'—all life being regulated—to use significant verses of Browning:

> 'By the single care
> I' the last resort,—that I made thoroughly serve
> The when and how, toiled when was need, reposed
> As resolutely at the proper point,
> Braved sorrow, courted joy, to just one End—
> Namely, that just the creature I was bound
> To be, I should become, nor thwart at all
> God's purpose in creation.'

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF TRUTH

We have set out to describe some of those potencies springing from Christian character, which, working in the various social spheres, have made the religion of Jesus the largest and most important factor in the progress of mankind. And our aim is not so much to cover the whole ground, which would be impossible, as to seize instances which may exhibit the distinctive qualities and vast range of this influence. And so we begin with the True. Christianity does not influence society and social progress simply by the spirit of altruism, which it makes operative. That, though a common, is a most confined and inadequate conception of its social power. The Christian spirit working in men, carries within it a distinct idea of truth, and undergirds the whole world of human knowledge and interests, with that idea.

Christianity has so far educated mankind, that even the most material minds, centred exclu-

sively in the present and the visible, confess that unselfish love is a force among men. They can only conceive of this, however, as an inference from self-interest, a kind of 'sport' which has sprung, quite unaccountably, from a universe based on force, and built up by ceaseless rivalry of warring energies. They are infinitely far from discerning, that this unselfish love is not merely the ultimate effect—the last contradictory outcome of a system based on ceaseless assertions of force,—but the beginning; that a purpose of love, conceived in the mind of a self-existent Personality, is the veritable Source of all. In other words, the roots of this universe are not material, but intellectual, moral, and spiritual, in a Personality, who has created, for an intellectual, moral, and spiritual end, that He may stand self-discovered to a universe of created intelligences, and have them with Him in an undying fellowship.

When, then, through Christ, we come into filial union with this Personality, we stand with Him at the centre of truth and being. Every department of creation is related, in scope and form, to this central purpose, and has a part in working toward a full realisation. The Christian has a

peculiar interest in every aspect of that creation, inasmuch as it shows forth, with divine originality, and in measureless variety, lights of that central purpose of love, realised in chief through his own sonship with God. And as thinkers come up from a particular study of parts, in the vast scheme of nature, with inferences and theories based upon the facts under their own eye, the Christian has a concern such as no other one can have, to see that these inferences and theories are not rash, and in contradiction to higher facts. He must keep the question open till fuller knowledge decide. Of course he has no refuge but in the full truth. But in his higher sphere of spiritual communion with God, he also has facts to be reckoned with. And so theories get sifted, and onesided statements are corrected, and new harmonies between natural and spiritual emerge, and truth orbs toward the perfect round of that full synthesis, when, according to Paul, the glory of creation shall be seen in the manifestation of the sons of God.

How Christian character, because of this commanding relation to truth, has influenced the social progress of man, we shall not—beyond what has already been advanced—attempt to show. Enough has been given for suggestion,

and that must suffice. Yet it may be interesting to recall the recent defeat, or rather the withdrawal of human thought and interest, from mere material explanations, and the evident reaction toward the spiritual, and specially toward the problem of Personality, as containing the clue to the mystery of existence. That is a tendency of which much is to be made by Christian men. We must not suffer ourselves to be ruled out of the courts of reason. Rather must we labour to maintain the spiritual view of the universe, not with weapons of authority, but by establishing in a living Church, the reality of the spiritual, and meeting all knowledge in a trustful spirit, assured that there can be no discord, that every particular truth will fill out the full harmony of truth, 'the great chime and symphony of nature.'

But there is one point of great importance still to be considered. The Christian Personality stands in such a commanding relation to 'whatever things are true,' because of a prior relation to Him who is the True. His interest in all true things is accentuated, because of his attitude to the Great Personality who called them all into being. The bond between him and God is of a kind to transfigure his whole nature, and even

transform his researches into the True. He is not a mere speculator, sounding the abysses of the Divine. He is not here a scientific man, with his exact methods of research, ascertaining truth in this difficult field. He is not a poet or artist dreaming beautiful imaginations. In the great venture of faith, he has come into personal relation and submission to Him who is True. The Christian is a decentralised man. Self-dethroned, he has come into a personal relation to the True; yea, the Spirit of the True has come into him, to guide him in personal being into fuller fellowship.

These, you say, are the commonplaces of theology. Ay, but they are far from being commonplace in ethics and social philosophy. It is just because their unique and sublime character, from the standpoint of the study of the True, has not been apprehended, that men have been short-sighted in their explanations of the social influence of the faith. Because of that attitude of surrender to the Absolute True, God comes down into the Christian soul, not only in personal presence, but in His whole view of things regarding man, life, the world, the future. Living in God, the Christian is drawn up into the circle of the divine thought, and sent out to realise it among

men. He has not simply got a different theory; he has passed through an experience, and risen into a new life, related to God and eternity, which have carried him to the centre of a new world, and given him a grasp of truths and their relationships, in the depths of his soul, which makes him immutable against all doubt, inviolate from fear. He is not a mere critic; but one with God, in the bonds of redeeming love, to realise all His ideals, and see His complete purpose through.

Because of this relation to Truth—this view of the absolute dominion of the True over all personal interests—the Christian becomes a social force at every point, where he touches human life, of the first magnitude. First, in the absoluteness of his devotion. He owes existence to Him who is the Personal True. He has been called into being to realise and fulfil the True. The interests of the True take precedence over all personal interests and claims. And so under the inspiration of the Christian spirit, men have been willing for the sake of the True—spiritual truth, truth of conscience, truth of intellectual principles—gladly to give up their lives. A hundred times progress would have come to a dead

stop, if it had not been for the dynamic of sacrifice. Culture is incapable of sacrifice ; it is self-centred. Again, why should a man sacrifice what remains of his seventy years of life, to find out facts about a material universe, which is itself hurrying to dissolution? Materialism saps the springs of sacrifice. Only in a surrendered heart, believing in an Absolute True, whose interests are supreme over all persons, can spring those heroisms and self-sacrificing impulses, which have carried the world to higher levels of being, and fertilised the life of man.

But notice, secondly, where the Christian character begins to operate. Through the dynamic of personal influence. He does not begin with the pursuit of the True in plants and animals, but in himself. His whole inner life is an intense effort to come into oneness of mind with the True. And though that be without the sphere of society, in the inner world of devotion, it profoundly affects society. Here we have perhaps the grandest social effect of the Christian character — an effect which had been working continuously over the entire area of the Church, through all the centuries. The sere heart of the old pagan world leaped to behold in Christian

men a new fruitage of personal excellences—ideals of sympathy, of chivalry, of purity, of sterling conscience, of serene calm, of ardent sacrifice. It hailed them as approximations to the ideal Truth of human nature, and went on to work them into the life of the race. And so, bred of secret communion with the True, qualities have been developed in renewed souls, which, reflected in action, and built up in character, have raised the human level generation by generation.

But, thirdly, see the social potency of Christian character, working in the sphere of society. The Christian is a man who has a prior obligation to God the Absolute True. He lives to advance the master end of the True, the redemption of men. But he is in society. He carries down into that sphere, all the conceptions of man and life learned from God. He has relations to men in themselves, and as made for the glory of God. Standing thus, he is not primarily a theorist or innovator on social matters. He is mainly seeking other and higher ends. He cannot help, however, being an influence. Even when denied, as was the case with the early Christians, voice or power in social affairs, in virtue of his very idea of the worth of man, he is moved to sympathy and help.

The religious longing that men should fulfil their ideal, creates a social longing to take away everything hindering that fulfilment. That thought, too, of man's inherent greatness, even in days of political impotence, worked like a climatic influence, repressing tyranny, exposing the wrong of slavery, exalting considerations of humanity, pushing into the foreground everything which made for the culture, and security, and comfort of human beings.

And so European life gradually changed. And through interminable conflicts, human personality steadily grew, asserting spiritual rights with which kings may not interfere; civil rights and liberties, belonging to man because of his inherent capacities, and necessary to the complete development of human society; immunities, advantages, enjoyments, of value for the full culture of the entire nature. In more ways than we can wait to describe is the Christian character, in virtue of the whole view of existence to which it has yielded itself, bearing down on the public life of man, working to the higher good of the world.

But, fourthly, Christian character stands on an absolute surrender to Truth. We are in Him who is the True, and knowing Him, we must seek to

know all things in Him. This sends us in on ourselves, back on history, out on the world. And since we have appealed to Truth, to Truth we must go. There can be no stay to research, discussion, controversy, but the full-rounded discovery of the Truth. The heathen and Mohammedan nations of the world are stagnant as a pool. In every living Christian people, a brisk life of never-ceasing discussion, on every imaginable theme, prevails. Yea, the divine thought, discovered to the surrendered soul, moves in so exalted a region of purpose and plan, that only by fragments, in single pulses of thought, can men realise its bearings and manifold issues. Unlimited liberty is given to human individuality in slowly reaching up to each fragment of that thought. Every possible view is stated, elaborated, exhausted; and so, step by step, now on this side, now on that, men are slowly advancing to the reconciling and all-harmonising view discovered in revelation.

And coming last of all to the circumference, we reach this material world. That is not primary, but secondary. Personality comes first in the revelation of a personal God; but nature is included in His plan as a mediate creation, sub-

serving the ends of Personality. And the Christian personality comes into this material region, expecting a universe, the outblossoming of God's personal purpose, the reflection of His personal thought. The personal reason of man expects to find in the world without, the manifestation of the divine reason. It was a Christian instinct, which impelled Lord Bacon to propound his inductive system of observation, which inspired the infinitely patient research of Kepler, and Galileo, and Newton. They longed and were content to read God's thoughts from His works. As men are falling away from the Christian view, they are becoming more rash in hypothesis, more unmeasured in speculation, cutting and carving at facts, ignoring whole sides of existence, pushing other sides into exaggeration, ignoring the spiritual in man, exalting the material.

It is the Christian character which, because of its special relation to Truth, takes in all existence in due relation and proper proportions, 'seeing life steadily, and seeing it whole.' And therefore, after all excesses and aberrations, now on this side and now on that, it is the Christian view which will hold the confidence of men, and guide the progress of the world.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN SENSE OF HONOUR

EBERS, in a note to one of his Egyptian stories, tells an interesting little legend. A wise man, being summoned to forecast the future to an Eastern king, said, 'Sire, every relation that you have is to die before you.' The prospect of such a number of deaths seemed so dismal, that the self-willed ruler ordered the seer to the block. Another seer, called to the perilous task of prophecy, said, 'Sire, you will live longer than all your relations.' The prospect was so pleasing that the king gave the seer a great reward.

Both had said the same thing. Only they looked at the fact from different points of view; and with strikingly different effect, as one found to his loss and the other to his gain. The whole settlement of a question sometimes depends on the point of view. We are led into this line of remark, observing the distinction between the ordinary position, assumed in the discussion of

social questions, and the distinctly Christian standpoint. Men as a rule begin with raising the question of relative rights. From end to end of society, we find individuals, classes, trades, agitating for their fair share of profits, and their due recognition in all sorts of ways. There seems to be a growing tendency, to press abstract theories of economic right to unpractical and sometimes mischievous extremes, even in the absence of any dominating necessity, in the poverty or bondage of individuals or bodies of men. And multitudes, despairing of ever bringing all classes to their relative places of right, would annihilate private property, pool the nation's resources, and compel all to share alike in one inclusive social scheme.

There never has been a termination of these agitations; from that standpoint there never will be. Like the first seer in our story, they are beginning at the wrong end.

There is a profound moral reason why men can never reach a true satisfaction, starting with the idea of their relative claims. Life is a dower, and carries with it burdens of obligation. We waken into life, in a network of relations, to parents, relations, friends; and the first questions, for

every one who is loyal to the facts of life, are, What am I owing in this, that, and the other respects, to all those by whom I am what I am? As we essay to meet our obligations, and take our place with a view to this in the scheme of the world's business, our rights—what things are due to us—will shape themselves definitely in our view.

Mr. Ruskin has pointed out with great power, that we cannot isolate a mere fragment of human nature such as man's acquisitive instinct, and—upon the principle 'that he is idle and covetous, and that the maximum quantity of wealth, embodied in material forms and measured by money, is the sole object of endeavour'[1]—build up a science and art of political economy, applicable to the world as it stands. Life is organically one, and must be dealt with as one. And so we cannot isolate the problem of our political and social rights, and treat them in separation from life's central interests and aims. We must take in as a whole, in its fundamental conditions and relations, the life which owns these rights. The only correlative to right, is duty. The only thing which can establish a moral claim (for right is a moral claim) is duty done, service rendered. And

[1] *John Ruskin, Social Reformer*, by J. A. Hobson, p. 64.

no man, of right, can take his stand on his claims from others, till he has loyally striven to meet his obligations to others. And the consideration of these obligations carries him into his conception of life as a whole. And so it is our view of our obligations to others, which is regulative of the whole problem of duties and rights.

Jesus Christ, when He essayed to restore a ruined world, which was ruined economically as well as morally and spiritually, acted on this principle. Human rights were trampled under foot. There was a riot of social wrong, as well as universal, moral and spiritual, corruption. And in uniting men to God, He had it in mind, to lead them to the principles of all right living, social as individual, in Him. And what was His plan? To revive in man, the buried and outraged sense of obligation,—to make the sense of that a living and powerful force within the soul. But that He could not accomplish, on ordinary levels. He essayed to raise obligation to a higher power; not simply to call forth in men a deference to statute, but through an infinite sacrifice to win love, to create a sense of honour, eager to interpret and meet obligation; not waiting for

statute, but moving in the impulse of free love. And so—for so many-sided is all the work of God—the sacrifice which answered to God for our personal transgression, woke that love-born sense of honour, which is not merely the spring of our personal sanctification, but the principle of social regeneration.

By the introduction of steam into a great factory—an old story now—the driving forces of that complicated industrial system were unified. Operations that had been carried on formerly by other means—water, manual labour, and so forth—are now performed at a higher rate of speed, and with greater ease than formerly. And other and vaster operations are inaugurated, which were practically impossible, till such a magnificent motor had been utilised. So, by the introduction of this new sense of obligation, springing up in response to His great sacrifice; by bringing in so immeasurable a motive to obey, acting perpetually, and with such power on all that is most central and sensitive in the human heart, Christ controls the whole realm of moral duty. To the ordinary duties of morality He adds a higher sanction. They are better done, because done for Christ's sake. The outward

act may be the same, but they are permeated with a finer spirit.

And then, as we have seen, He has raised obligation to a higher power, by His sacrifice of free love. We are thrown in upon our own sense of honour, to originate a response of love. The element of compulsion is removed, and we act in the liberty of affection. We take wider circuits, and attain to finer senses, of obligation. And Christ, in the conscience of His people, is the driving force of the whole.

Let us leave now the inner circle of religion and come down into the sphere of social life. It would take a treatise, rather than what remains of this brief chapter, to show the magnificent position, in which this conception and attitude place the Christian man, for dealing with the whole problem of society. The world is not, in the language of the ancient Pistol, his oyster to open and eat—an arena in which to urge contending claims, where rival parties struggle for the mastery. He has his private and separate interests like other men, but in this great principle of obligation, for benefit received, to God in Christ, he has a determining and regulating principle, which brings his personal interests into

harmony with, and makes them subservient to, public duty.

By meeting all the obligations of our position, under the inspirations and in the master-view of what we owe to Christ, we are serving a moral order as real, though maintained by the deliberate action of free wills, as the law of the planetary motions. The common idea, of 'every one for himself, and "the great Egoist" take the hindmost,' is a species of social atheism.

Strife can never be a principle of community, and our social and industrial wars would rend society to the foundation, were it not for other bonds and influences, which still continue to bind her into one. From the Christian standpoint, society is seen to be a moral scene. Man was made for society. Each individual is dependent on others for multitudinous offices; and human nature can only develop on every side, in the atmosphere, and amid the influences of society. At bottom, then, society is a league of mutual help, where each assists the other, and where each has place, and consideration, and influence, in the measure of his worth and service. The first point, then, is not what is due to me, but what am I owing, what are my obligations

to the society in virtue of all that I have received?

At least, that is the point at which the Christian strikes into every social sphere. Carrying down the governing principle of his spiritual being, he asks himself, 'What do I owe for the benefits which have been conferred upon me?' Because of the safety, comfort, and enriched resources of his life, owing to the public action of others, he is a debtor to the community. He cannot selfishly enjoy, but must bear his part. And so, wherever Christian men abound, they are to be found responding to obligations, and, along all lines open to them, laying themselves out for the public good. Take the ceaseless propaganda of Christian effort, in every social sphere—effort impelled by a Christian sense of honourable obligation—out of the life of Britain, and in short space the lack would prove a catastrophe. And above and beyond specific services, Christians, because of their openness to higher than material needs, through their spiritual sympathies and interests, are weaving impalpable yet mighty bonds of mutual trust, which are holding millions together, beyond the power of roaring, rampant self, to disintegrate.

It may be said, however, that this view of

society is not exclusively the product of the Christian character. And the allegation is true. In so far as natural elements in the constitution of the race, determine society, they move in this direction. The family is a league of mutual help, whose bond is love, in which authority, though founded in a natural relation, exists, not by force, but as a voluntary concession, gladly made for love and service's sake. The primitive unions, rendered necessary by the constant strife which had to be maintained, with rude nature and ruder foes, were all leagues of service, in which authority and right sprang from service. But, as universal experience shows, these have had constantly to yield to personal ambitions, dynastic strifes, class interests, introducing all sorts of divisive elements, to impair, and sometimes to annihilate, this central law.

Is not this very significant, that it is the Christian character,—and conspicuously that character, when it is lived fully and freely in evangelical liberty, and fed by evangelical truth,—which has reaffirmed this natural law of society, and given what currency and influence it possesses in this modern world? Yea, coming down from a loftier sphere—from a fellowship of love with Father

and Son that awakens a new sensitiveness to obligation—the Christian spirit has done more than affirm a natural law of service. It has reconstituted, widened, and deepened this natural principle, in the Christian law of brotherhood. Indeed, to reflective minds, one of the surest proofs that Christianity is of God, lies in the fact that the spirit which it creates, allying itself with all the nobler impulses of human nature, gives them a new birth, leading them out of their native bondage, in which they have never been able to express themselves, to a fuller than natural life.

But not only does Christian principle, working in renewed characters, recreate the true idea of society. It brings to the realisation of its ideal a far superior motive force,—not a law which can only touch exterior action, not a cast-iron social scheme, which to get rid of inequality crushes individuality, but a moral and social affection. Here we do not refer to anything Utopian, but to a practical impulse, native to human character, and risen to a new prominence in the redeemed character, become a new force through the presence and influence of Jesus Christ—the sense of honour, the impulse to make a return for benefits

received. That has already proved its power by acting through millions of men, by transfiguring whole generations.

How this spiritual motor, acting continuously on the deepest spring of life, not only intensifies the sanction of ordinary obligation, but enlarges the scope of the principle of obligation, it would be very difficult in short space to show. Because Christ found, in the need of man, an argument for self-sacrificing service, because the passion of His heart was, that we should realise the divine ideal of our lives, He has given shape to the ethical ideals of Christian civilisation. He has not simply codified and enforced rules,—He has done something far profounder and more far-reaching. He has called forth, in the living consciousness of myriads of redeemed men, and men, who have been influenced by the ethical spirit of His religion, though they have not risen into personal union with Himself, a reigning sense of obligation to educate, to discipline, to organise, to Christianise, at whatever cost, the sunken nations of the world. Christian people have bound these, as supreme behests of righteousness and love, upon themselves and their children, to be done for Jesus' sake. The world is

moving forward on impulses of obligation, which have positively been called into being, within the human soul, by the larger ideals, first shadowed forth, in the Consecration and Sacrifice of Christ.

And further, from the character of this new social motor, a whole set of consequences ensues, of great variety and marked significance.

This being a force working from within, it acts round the whole circle of human interest, in spheres where law cannot come. Springing from an inner constraint of conscience, and not from external compulsion, there is about such action, a spontaneity, a grace, an inwardness, peculiarly its own. This sense of honour freely operating in consecrated hearts, awakens responsive emotions of respect, admiration, and chivalrous devotion. The common good, being—in ultimate aim at least—the individual law, human life is widened in idea, heightened in the prevailing impressions of its worth. Generous and unselfish principles overpeer the coarser and more self-regarding impulses, and in hours of crisis and peril, prompt self-denial and sacrifice. This is not theory, but a tracing to their individual root in the Christian character, of social potencies, which have largely prevailed in actual fact, giving distinguishing

honour to nations and periods, in which they were the reigning impulses of innumerable lives.

And thus, working freely from within, this sense of honour fosters individuality, while it exalts the interests of the community. The ages of the domination of Christian principles, have been ages of marked individuality. There always has ensued in such seasons, a blossoming of personality along the whole line of human activity. Men were thrown back, in their longing to serve, on themselves, on their native gifts of art, or skill, or thought, or administration. Moving from a pure inward influence, they revealed a quality of vitality, truth, genius, in all they did. And yet, all went for the general good, towards the common weal of national worth and influence.

And through the free action of individuality, under this eager sense of honour, comes an inspiring variety of distinctions and diversities among men, each standing in the rank of his service, receiving the place and the reward inherently his due. And so emerge in their true place, the problems of human rights, which are to be considered at length in next chapter.

Have we not here the power which, when fully applied, can renovate and lift to a truly

ethical level the whole social organism, reinforcing ordinary obligations, creating the spirit which makes service a joy, and widening the horizon of obligation, to include everything which makes for the higher life of man? All this is in the line of the true culture of the human personality. Whatever elements of socialism or communism may be suitably introduced, must come as the prompting of this larger ethical spirit. Those forcible rearrangements of society, having for their end the equalising of external conditions, without any moral preparation of the human spirit, could in and by themselves secure but little, and would introduce new evils, more disastrous than those which they seek to remove. And what a *caput mortuum* every such scheme is seen to be, beside this free living growth, securing the good of the whole, while giving full play to the individuality of every man; grounding right in service; giving to the lowest a freeman's place on the ground of service, and to the highest, whatever may be his fairly-won honours or rewards, only a servant's place for the good of the whole.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF SOCIAL RIGHTS

In last chapter we learned from an Eastern fable the value of a right point of view. As the very word might teach us, society is a state of mutual help, where obligations arise because of help given and received, and in which a sense of honour is at work, moving men to recognise and discharge obligation. The problem of rights, then —of what is due to us under a certain state of society — is a secondary problem, rising out of obligations conferred by us, and limited by the general good of society as a whole.

Of course, as we saw in our chapter on the Christian idea of the True, the Christian spirit carried with it into society a certain view of the worth of human life, and of the greatness of human destiny, which created a new sense of what was due to man as man. That, however, affected and affects all men alike. It is a presupposition underlying the whole problem of

rights, not a principle entering into the problem, determining in individual cases specific rights. These are determined by the law of service to the community, and in consistency with the interests of the community, as we have described.

Now, it is of the utmost importance to realise that this is the sole ground, and the single measure, of the validity of social right in the Christian view. The natural foundations of society—in the family, and in the common necessities of men—of themselves would lead us to this conclusion. But it is the whole contexture of thought, carried down into society by Christian men, and expressed in their judgment and action, which mainly, if not solely, enforces that view to-day. Because of the central relation of his life to Christ and God, the Christian is eager to recognise service, to own obligation, to concede claims of right on the ground of obligation. His obedience to his Lord is love-service for benefits rendered. He recognises Christ's unmeasured right over him, even to life itself, because of what He has done. The Christian is a decentralised man, not only as living from a new centre, but as bound to another will. His whole life moves from the

point of surrender, and is animated and upheld in all activity by the divine power, flowing through surrender.

Such a daily discipline in the holy places of the soul, devoted to continual study of God's rightful claims, and in submission thereto, must train the soul in the perception and discrimination of mutual right. Because of this vision of right on the highest plane, a new sense of the sanctity of right will be carried through the whole of life.

But not only have we this deepened sense of right, from the burden of personal obligation arising out of Christ's glorious work on our behalf. In that apocalypse of love, we are carried past all provisional ideas of existence, into its very essence. We see that God Himself is love, an impulse to serve. His authority does not stand on force; but, like the light from the sun establishing the glory of the orb of day, is the discovered supremacy of His love. He has given all, with an instinctively lavish hand, to call out the sense of obligation in His intelligent creatures; so that meeting his rightful claims, they might rise on the ladder of law, into fellowship with Himself. God has made us so dependent,

that we might grow up in a network of relations, each with its own service, and creating a separate obligation. He caused the race to develop from a single pair, that the filaments of relationship may go searching into the farthest parts, and out to the bounds of the world. While life was largely on the lower planes, and the moral was undeveloped, or possibly ill-developed, systems of authority—parental, magisterial, social, civil, religious—impinged on the will. But as man drew near his majority, in the highest region of all, that of spirit, God threw the direct discipline of law away, and recovered men to the service of right, by the sole magnetism of divine love.

Mere authority then yields, as belonging to the period of pupilage. Christ stands, in the majesty of His unlimited and uncontested rights, on the grounds of service. Yea, the law of God is so unspeakably sacred, because it has in ineffable measure the soul of service, being a self-communication of the divine, by which a created being of yesterday, and rising up from animal levels, might come through service into fellowship with God Himself.

Right, then, stands on service, and is in the

measure of service. And this holds not simply of the relations of individuals to individuals, but of natural and political institutions. There is a strong tendency for all authority to assume the absolute form, and for multitudes to give an unthinking and unlimited obedience. But every institution has a soul of service, like the universal purpose of God, in which these separate elements stand. And in their measure of service to man, and to the fulfilment of the divine purpose in which man is to reach his crown, lie the range and depth of their rightful authority. As a matter of fact, the most sacred of these institutions is limited in a great variety of ways in accordance with this principle. Direct parental authority over the decisions and actions of children is limited to the season of dependence. With the dignity of self-conscious existence and self-mastery, come inalienable rights to free personal decision. Parental authority henceforth lives on, in the personal ascendency of the father and mother, won in long years of relationship; and in the widening consciousness, as life opens out, of the permanent blessing secured by parental discipline in earlier years.

In like manner the authority of Monarchy in

Britain has been modified many times, because, under antiquated forms, it was ceasing to serve the highest interests of a nation, growing in the capacity of wise self-government. Service really limited allegiance, and justified the introduction of those limitations involved in democratic institutions. And Monarchy has been rehabilitated, and is a power in our midst, because fully recognising its circumscribed powers, and trusting the really operative forces of government, our sagacious Queen has, in many ways, so conspicuously served, not only the cause of order, but the highest interests of the people.

The principle which we have enunciated, then, holds in the widest and most unlimited sense. And from this certain very important consequences ensue. Since right is founded on service, and is a social or public recognition of service, the interest of the community accordingly is put in the first place. No social scheme, cramping individuality by subjection to an all-embracing central control, could provide for the common interests better than this. Yet, so far as the spirit of Christ obtains in men, this is secured not by tyrannous external constraint, but by an internal vital principle. The Christian society

is a fellowship of mutual help. Service to the community, and to other individuals in this community, creates obligations. Rights are what a man possesses in virtue of obligations of others to him. And being freely conceded to him, the rights are upheld by law, that is, by the judgment and strong arm of the community.

While the community is safeguarded, then, the inherent rights of individuals, as factors in that community, are also conserved. As we saw in last chapter, the strongest incentives are brought to bear on individuality — the fullest place is given to it for social ends. And what is justly due to the individual actor is sacredly conserved. It is significant, that where the Christian view of society most fully obtains, there individual rights are inviolable, and the administration of the law which deals with them is most conspicuously pure and above reproach; whereas the rights that stand on conquest, or mere prescription, in absence or in violation of equity, have proved unstable in every age.

But it is far too little to say, that under this Christian view the community is safeguarded. While the rights of individuals are conserved,

the interests of the community are enormously enhanced.

By unwise liquidation, trustees may forfeit the most precious portion of their assets. In its eagerness to pool the national resources, that every one may share alike, socialism squanders, or at the least immensely reduces in value, its most precious asset, human individuality. It would cramp individual freedom, and annihilate individual incentive. Contrariwise, the Christian sense of honour, widening the horizon of life, moving men to live for the whole, since influences from the whole have gone to mould them, spurs individual gift to vigorous independent exercise. The Christian is under no necessity,—as in some socialist schemes,—of toiling in the communal workshop, feeding at the communal dining-table, and sleeping in the communal caravanserai. He is free to follow his impulse, whether prophetic, or artistic, or scientific, or practical. And so, from the wellheads of great human spirits, rivers of invigoration have flowed into the life of the race. Lives have been spent, with absolutely no result at the time—lives which never would have approved themselves, to any possible leaders of any possible social

schemes—which in their quality and in the magnitude of their ultimate result, have made humanity their debtors. Under a religious inspiration, they lived in the whole and in the far, for ends with which none sympathised then, from which all profit now.

We saw in the previous chapter that the Christian sense of honour not only strengthened obligations actually existing, but greatly widened and refined the sense of obligation. And now from the standpoint of right, we can see precisely the footing on which these obligations stand. They are not counsels of perfection, which a man can safely disregard without failing in the discharge of any positive duty. They belong to a view of existence, which a man can only be in harmony with, by loyally carrying out, from centre to circumference. For what is the very idea of life? Creation is a service, in which the soul and essence of Deity are expressed. It has been called into being in order that in million-fold finite variety, His glory might stand discovered to His creatures. And His end in this discovery is, that under the sense of obligation, rendering to God His rightful service, we may come into spiritual communion with Him-

self. The nimbus of that divine destiny hangs over every human being. Whatever he may be in himself, God, whose purpose of loving service originated all, planned that place and career for him. If, then, by how much I am debtor to a brother for service rendered, I must recognise a right as belonging to him—it may be to honour, or it may be to wages, or it may be to a position of authority—much more must I recognise God's overwhelming right (because I owe everything to Him) to have His great purpose, so far as may be possible, respected and fulfilled. Again, if I invest these merely human rights with sanctity, using the force of the community to uphold them, against invasions of selfishness and wrong, so must I invest with far more sanctity the rights of God, because they touch a region in me which the law cannot coerce, and press claims which the sword cannot enforce. They are not less binding, but more.

But how can we meet these duties of so strict obligation? Where are they to be found? They lie within the general aim, they emerge in the effort of giving effect to that great purpose of God, within which we stand and under which we have received our blessings. Here the Christian

conscience is only imperfectly educated as yet. Philanthropy is a kind of surplusage to most men. We have still to feel as we ought, in downright reality, the cosmic passion as the basal law of social life. Our selfishnesses and swollen ambitions and huge accumulations of wealth are eccentricities, excesses, diseases of society, as much as goitre or elephantiasis are diseases of the body. We are all living for a social end, fixed in the very frame of existence, and in the purpose of God. We reach the highest personal good as we fit into the whole, occupying to the full, and along every avenue of faculty, the sphere which He has given.

And beyond the circuit of civilised life (where service leads to the creation of rights, and rights are vantage-grounds for further service), lie in one direction the sunken, barbarous, and unprogressive nations of the world. They have not come into the fellowship of civilised peoples. But as we sometimes read of wards in chancery, they are God's wards, being kept alive for that destiny into which it is His will that they should come. And so the very point of honour, in Christian hearts, is to meet this unfulfilled part of God's purpose, to discharge to Him this

neglected task—and not along one, but along every line by which they can be raised in the scale of being. True, there are other motives—subsidiary motives of kindred, prospective motives of consequences—which would accrue. But here we are on the ground of positive obligation, and where obligations are at the strongest, because here the sense of what is due to God singly determines us, and we are on the main track of His purpose.

But not only in regard to the sunken undeveloped nations of the world, does this stringent obligation come in. We are in fellowship with God now, because while there was one possibility of rescue, He resolved never to give us up, even though our ruin was the direct result of our own sin. Christ has created an immeasurable sense of the worth of man by His sacrifice on their behalf. He gave Himself, to make the divine ideal possible in every case. And whatever we do to one soul with this intent, we do as unto Christ. So, under the strictest sense of obligation, we put ourselves in the place of drunkards, the unclean, social waifs of every description; not seeking for them a mere bodily content and painless death, but that they may come to the

height of God's purpose for them. To go back on our figure of the steam motive-power, keeping the vast factory humming with manifold energy; as the power of Christ drives us, so we are carried round the great circle of God's will. And Christian philanthropy has a beneficence beyond all other, because in meeting present material need, it does not leave out the soul, and conscience, and God.

But there is a further point of immense importance, to which we must devote what remains of this chapter. Because this whole conception of society and of social rights, distinguishes between a natural or real ground of right, and legal sanction and confirmation of right, there rests in the society the perennial power of adjusting right to the actual condition of succeeding times, and to varying circumstances. All human progress is more or less one-sided. Defect attaches universally to terrene things. And therefore, while the general principles which we have been enunciating, may have more or less been actuating men, yet some may have arrived at particular wrong judgments as to what was due, in one case or in another. This may have arisen from one class having a preponderance of

influence, or another being denied its just share of influence. Or it may have come from an actual change in the conditions of society, which has made privileges that were reasonable in one age, preposterous in another.

This adjustment of rights to the actual condition of things in a new time, involving as it does the withdrawal of old privilege, is always difficult. When men have had no common ground on which to confer, the attempt has proved the parent of revolution. And even when, through the potency of the Christian spirit, there has been a common ground, such adjustment has been far from easy. The very sacredness of right, and the respect for law which this spirit creates, makes men reluctant, save under the spur of necessity, to raise settled matters, and to adjust new boundaries of right and duty. And so moderation, and a strong tendency to conserve whatever is defensible — the very pillars of national stability — have marked the leading Christian nations, and especially our own.

Yet the Christian spirit, grounding social rights on service, is never at ease when rights are pushed in excess of their inherent validity, or when they stand on foundations of mere statute, all real

claims being wanting. British history contains magnificent proof, through the entire course of its annals, of this notable fact. At first, in days of storm and stress, too much power it was thought could not be centred in the king, and in the nobles, who bore with him the burden of national defence. But when, external defence assured, the internal activities of business, social administration, study, and worship, assumed larger prominence, the rights of the king and of the nobles must undergo limitation, in order that the classes and the masses, who were making so large a contribution to the commonweal, should have their due share of privilege and liberty. That is the history, in effect, of the British people, from the days of the Heptarchy to the present hour. What the Puritans accomplished in relation to kings, what our reforming forefathers achieved in relation to the privileged classes, labour is striving to secure from capital,—a more equitable adjustment of mutual rights. And the power of the enlightened conscience of such a nation as ours, may be seen in the constitutional changes to which, from time to time, the nation has consented, that every interest may be represented, that to all justice may be done.

We think that there will be no serious doubt on the part of fair-minded inquirers, that these influences are traceable in the main, to the potencies which flow into society from the Christian character. If any mind, however, be still in a state of questioning on this point, two facts should set that questioning at rest. The first is the undeniable effect of the Reformation in fostering the spirit of liberty. The other is the cognate fact that in every nation which enjoyed the influence of that great movement, the struggle for religious rights and privileges (with which we are not dealing in these chapters), preceded and paved the way for the successful assertion of civil rights.

Along with a conservatism which is slow to innovate, the Christian spirit thus brings into society an incorruptible sense of right, which must seek towards its ideal, along every line, and in every department of the national life. There is no problem too high for this spirit to face, too difficult for it to unravel. The short cuts of force, revolution, war, as solving nothing, are abhorrent in its regard. The Christian conception of society and of social right, as grounded on service, give it time, will, even in the most

entangled questions, work by moral means, by mutual conference and compromise, to larger right and wider harmonies of truth. And if defects remain, the primary truth of society is not right, but service. Let a man live for others, and he shall have his reward, if not at the hand of society, then from God.

CHAPTER V

PURITY

WE now come into the region in which we shall see, over against an irresistible tendency to decay, the most commanding social potency of the Christian character. The more or less artificial organism of society, rests on the natural and divinely-created organism of the family. It is most instructive to reflect, that the enormous superstructure of organised human life in tribes, kingdoms, empires, rests on a foundation not in the world of matter, but of mind, in an emotional appetency between the man and the woman—in the presence of a spiritual factor, that of love. Here we have our most immediate and domestic proof, that the whole bulk of the seen springs out of the unseen, that all material existence rests at bottom on a foundation of soul.

We can understand, then, how, as the life of the tree depends on pulses of force constantly flowing in from without, the life of society

depends chiefly on the nature of the central impulse flowing in to sustain the whole. Where it is corrupt, corruption extends through the entire frame. In its purity and elevation, society is vitalised and lifted to a nobler plane.

It is entirely incorrect, accordingly, to treat the relation between the sexes and the marriage-bond, as a specific case of related right and obligation, and nothing more. We are here at the vital source of human society, dealing with the sovereign pulse which, forming the family bond, perpetuates the generations. Here, if anywhere, we must be near the original fountains of life, the uncreated impulse from which the visible springs. Civilised life, with its innumerable relations of social service and accruing right, is the outcome of this master relation kept pure; while pollution here involves the organised life of man, no matter how developed its civilisation, or strong its social sanctions, in cancerous pollution and decay.

What broke up every nation of the ancient world, and eminently the world-state of Rome, the heir of all their power, was in a peculiar degree corruption in this central spring. Not to mention the imperishable indictment of Paul,

one has but to walk the streets of disentombed Pompeii, or to weigh the evidence incidentally given in Latin literature, to rest assured of this. And perhaps the social crown of Christianity thus far, the circumstances in which she has most fully displayed on the arena of society her signal and solitary power, has been in lifting European life, even so far as it has been lifted, out of the tangle, pollution, and corrupt atmosphere of old heathen uncleanness, in creating new and ineffably loftier standards of personal purity, in elevating the relations of the sexes, in a word, founding the Christian home. Other potencies of the Christian character only began to discover their resources of force, at later stages, but from the dawn of the Kingdom of Christ this regenerating breath of purity has been breathed into human society; and, dissatisfied with all past attainments, still, like a reviving ozone, is it blowing over the world.

When one inquires what in the Christian character has produced these results, it is difficult to isolate and localise the specific cause. Everything distinctive of that character has contributed to this influence. Still, there is one element in a redeemed experience which stands

out from all the others, as the environing sanction of the Christian sense of purity. There is upon our renewed nature the consecrating touch of a divine affection. We are in union with God, because we have been loved with an infinite love. And with the thrill of this undeserved love, there has come an awestruck sense of the priceless worth of that nature, for which Christ could make so great a sacrifice. Yea, even that does not convey an adequate impression of the might of holy love which makes for purity. There is one aspect under which this truth appears constantly in the Epistles of Paul. This love of Christ is made real and mighty, as a force within the soul, by the illumination of the indwelling Spirit. Natural perceptions are weak, but the Holy Ghost makes heavenly things more real than the mightiest realities of earth. 'Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost?'

And so for all renewed men and women, heathen opinion, heathen pollutions of thought and feeling, were annihilated by the consecration of a holy saving love. Not merely the lower levels of society, nor the coarser elements of the higher classes, had succumbed to pagan

corruption. The foul leprosy of evil had permeated all life. Among the companions of Socrates we find, from the pellucid prose of Plato, those tainted with the unnameable sin, which has been barred out by terrible civil penalty from the modern state. Yet neither this Grecian sage, nor he, whose genius has made him visible to the world, manifests any horror or discovers an atom of feeling, as if that were a thing exceptional and to be deplored. In Christianity, however, there was a new beginning, a clean break with the past. Within the Christian pale were men and women of many classes, yet mostly the weak and the poor, to whom not only such evils themselves, but the thoughts which gave them birth, were impossible; who attached such a worth to human life, and put upon character such an honour, that even the secret far-off thought of sin was an intolerable indignity and shame.

On the face of it, such an effect, even in a small minority of lives, was manifestly divine. Nothing could have produced such a revolution save a power beyond man. And so, in accordance with the thought of Shakespeare,

> 'How far that little candle throws his beams!
> So shines a good deed in a naughty world,'

these individual examples of life on a new plane had a wide-reaching, discovering power. The uncleannesses of the old world were laid bare as in a purer light. Reason, explain, excuse, brazen out as they pleased, these things were sin, and they had no cloak for their sin. Ancient heathenism fell into utter collapse, and disappeared from the ways of men, far less through argument and change of belief, than because in face of a new purity, sufficiently realised to be an actual social force, the incurable uncleanness of her worship and life, stank in the nostrils of men.

Of the further victories of this spirit through the centuries, over rude, barbarian peoples—in creating the sentiment of chivalry, in refining the relations and enlarging the intercourse of the sexes, and finally in opening for woman a public career by the side of man,—the limits of this chapter will not permit specific mention. The influence of this spirit is as active, at the present time, as in any former age. Yea, in face of a reactionary drift of opinion, distinctly due to material views of life, the Christian spirit is powerfully working, and in many directions, to secure for women a larger place in the pro-

gressive movements which are shaping a better future for mankind.

It is a mere commonplace, that the material is an emblem of the spiritual. The courses of recent thought have led us to emphasise that truth. But we do not discern, as we should, how the higher and more articulate world of the spiritual not only illustrates, but influences, our life on more ordinary and material levels. Not only has that love relation, into which we have been brought by the sacrificing love of Christ, kindled a spirit of purity in individual souls, it has come down with transfiguring power into the natural institution of the family. Strengthening its bonds, hallowing its relations, heightening its influence, the Christian spirit has lifted to a new region of feeling the sense of kindred. Into the old irresponsible authority of fatherhood, extending to life and death, it has infused a high and tender sense of responsibility. Into the instinctive yearning of the mother-heart, it has breathed a spiritual longing, not merely for physical comfort to the offspring, but for intellectual and moral nurture. The new religious horizons of the soul, and heaven, and God, have invested with fresh dignity and larger meaning,

family life. The children have become not merely dependants to be subdued, but a sacred charge to be won. The atmosphere of the home changed from law to love. The family affections and the family relations, as we know them, came to be formed.

And so, in a state of things charged with innumerable forces of evil, there has been set up a generating centre of ethical life, the Christian family, which is pouring into society clean, refined, tender, sympathetic, intelligent, pious personalities, that are the salt of the earth, bearing the race on and up, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, age by age. Every footstep is a fall arrested. All progress is a surmounting of possible disintegration and decay. And the mightiest lever, which keeps lifting mankind above every possible catastrophe, is this Christian home, the earthly school of human affections, moral integrity, spiritual principles.

After a couple of months spent among Mohammedan peoples, we found ourselves one Sunday evening, during the spring of 1898, in the Christian quarter of Damascus. Returning to our hotel from the Mission Hospital, we came across the Christian population, family by

family, in the open air. The Christian household is a self-respecting institution, that can bear, and seeks, the light. His family arrangements the Moslem swathes in secrecy, since they are beneath what the best in him approves. And because of this openness of the Christian family life, a network of social influence is created, not only enriching existence by producing a pleasant variety of interest and occupations, but strengthening its moral stability. After the unpleasing spectacle of sealed harems, and closely-veiled ladies, driven in strictly-guarded vehicles through the streets, the sight of husband and wife walking side by side in the open light of day, strong in the liberty of mutual trust and love, and with their children clinging to their hands, or dancing round their knees, seemed like a glimpse from a nobler state of being.

The very joy of such family affection raises the moral temperature of the world. A social life springs up, which is the extension of the family spirit, fostering healthy sympathies, and engaging human hearts, in pleasures that are pure, in engagements that, while they gratify, refine and educate. Ofttimes we look askance

at social occupations and gaieties, but while we may have reason to frown upon too exclusive a devotion to those enjoyments, let us also remember that they are eliminating the darker and grosser possibilities from a vast number of lives, and keeping them, in their very pleasures, within the circle of purity, under the control of higher influences.

We constantly forget to what extent society, in its wider bearings and larger interests, is a Christian and not a natural fact. Take away the spirit, which Christianity has created, of self-respect and mutual trust, the high average of purity, the moral and spiritual sympathies, the prevailing sense of responsibility to God environing life;—and those social fellowships in study, in art, in culture, in philanthropic effort, so quickening to individual gift and character, would disappear. Human life would segregate, be kept apart by mutual fear, suspicions, jealousies, as in Mohammedan and pagan lands.

The difference between the civilised and the savage man, lies chiefly in the degree to which the sentiment of humanity has come to govern the former, and the larger human influences to prevail, over those which are more selfish

and personal. Yet had not corrosive sensual passion been subdued by this spirit of Christian purity, lives would not have been set free in large numbers to live on that nobler plane. From this single consideration, we may judge how largely the higher activities and associations of human beings owe their continuous exercise and unbroken strength to the strong sanction of purity, springing in ever-living force from the consciences of Christian men.

Then, as life becomes rich, various, full of social sympathies, pure affections, wide interests, lofty aspirations, men become an object of interest to themselves. And so a literature springs up, reflecting the lights and shades of human nature, telling the story of individual character, idealising specific excellences, describing great achievements, exhibiting the lines of human progress.

But to all these outcomes of the Christian sense of purity is to be added, as directly originating therefrom, the place and influence of woman in modern life. This is eminently a case where only the historical method, carried into minute detail, could show the social potency of Christian Personality acting steadily over the

area of Europe, and through centuries, in moulding woman for higher place, and creating for her ever more commanding social positions. And in such an inquiry every detail would be of interest, even those extremes of opinion in one direction, and in the other, which could not perpetuate themselves, as being untrue to a balanced view of life —the ascetic extreme, and the more chivalrous excesses of spiritualised passion, and knightly devotion. They revealed the new leaven at work in the old lump of humanity. They were half truths, disappearing in these particular forms, to reappear modified, and enriched, and balanced, by new conceptions, and hold the ground of common conviction.

A great subject, too, is the blossoming of the womanly nature, in the sunshine of this juster and kindlier view of her position, and functions, and possibilities. Here we have had a positive evolution before our eyes, very remarkable, even within the observation of those now living. Their place in the advanced life of the world, the parts taken by them even in the realm of thought, the burden of business and public responsibility which they successfully bear, their moral influence and social service, are an indispensable and immense factor

in civilisation, won, from what is a sealed and cloistered world in Mohammedan lands, by the supremacy of the Christian Spirit.

Singularly kind and considerate in many respects, the old Jewish law seems to us savage in its ruthless punishment of uncleanness. Such deeds as that of Phinehas send a thrill of horror through the modern mind. And one notices the same extreme severity in other primitive codes. They were nearer the fundamental truths of society than we are. They saw that licence meant social extinction, purity social development and strength. Let our lawgivers see to it, that their whole authority be given to brand licence and safeguard purity, not to safeguard licence and break down the awful sanctions, social and religious, of purity; else will they introduce into this magnificent creation of present civilisation the cancer of an inevitable decay.

CHAPTER VI

CHRISTIAN ÆSTHETICS

BEAUTY is the overflow of personality. On any other supposition than that of a creative personality, as the original of all things, the pervasive element of beauty is inexplicable. In the struggle for existence, of which a material evolution speaks, only those qualities would be developed, which were useful for the perpetuation of the individual. Beauty in that case would be something which, as a by-product, must have come in by the way. Even when Mr. Darwin set himself to explain its presence, he could only touch the fringe of the subject, by supposing that the gayer colours of the male served the ends of the race, by making him more attractive to the female. Intellectual theories have dwelt on the exquisite adjustments of the all-planning mind, the marvellous symmetry of living organisms, and so forth. Still, we are only in the outer courts of this great sanctuary of natural beauty. We

might have exquisite adjustments, as witness many of the works of man, without loveliness.

What gives the last redeeming touch of beauty to the least of natural objects? While our works of utility, like the steam-engine, are so far removed from beauty, how do things that serve the commonest necessities of man—the oats upon their stalk, the spears of grass in the field, the pine advancing its firm foot to the precipice edge—gleam with ineffable loveliness? We have a clue to that in what we find among ourselves. The human spirit, reaching out as yet to but a feeble and uncertain mastery of itself, lives only in sides or fragments of its own being. When it aims at the useful, it seeks merely what is useful, forgetting everything else — pouring its smoke into the air, its pollution into the stream, rearing its heaps of rubbish in huge unshapely masses, building its foundries and factories in hideous violation of every æsthetic law. Even in man, however, there is a brooding spirit which shapes from within, under forms of its own thought, either events which have actually transpired, or incidents and characters ideally reproduced through the medium of poetry and fiction. And to this world of art, this effluence of the human

spirit in ideal creation, something of that quality or character of beauty belongs. Over the commonest things there comes

> 'The light that never was on sea or land,
> The consecration, and the poet's dream.'

What attaches itself to some works of man, gleams from every work of God. He lives entirely in all He does. His slightest works have some trace of Himself, some effluence of His inner being. In all secondary and immediate ends, He is ever reaching on to the master end of self-discovery. And so a chance aggregation of vapours in the upper air, glistens at sunrise as with the presence-glory of God, or tones the far landscape with ethereal purples that thrill the soul.

Beauty is the overflow of personality. In all ages from the dawn of time, when men became conscious in the stress of war of the potencies slumbering in themselves, or when by any form of human mastery over enemies or elements they attained an intenser joy of existence, the instinct to invest the possessor of such power with visible honour became very strong. This thought came to us, in the place of all others in which to study prehistoric man to best advantage,—we

mean Copenhagen, in the Museum of Northern Antiquities there. No need to tell the attentive student that life was a struggle, for weapons of death, tools and appliances for defence, come first. But with the slackening of the terrible pressure, comes gleaming gold ornament, often of great beauty, for the conquering Thane, or for his wife, who strengthened his hand and perpetuated his race. Yea, beyond that period in the earliest stone age, side by side with the stone axe, you find the amber bead.

When wearied of national limits, men like the third Thothmes, or Seti I., or Rameses II., thirsted for virtual world dominion, their augmented self-consciousness, as they stretched their dominion from Nubia to the fountains of the Euphrates, expressed itself in vast temples, rivalling almost the limestone hills in their buttressed strength, their enclosed valleys in their pillared courts; and standing there, ostensibly to the pale deities whom they worshipped, but really to their own honour and praise.

The ages of sheer and rampant egoism passed, and in the Greek peoples, a finer spirit—a breath of liberty, a sense of patriotism, a spirit of inquiry, a feeling of the supremacy of truth—began

to spread through the world. And the reflection of this was at once discovered, in a perception of beauty, a sense of form, new in that day, and in its own way unrivalled since. The human spirit thoroughly awakened, and entering with joy into all the life spread before it in the world, tried to solve the riddle of being and destiny. In this these Greeks utterly failed. The iron limits of the world, and their own faculty, shut them in. They knew that in their highest quests they had not attained. But because they so loftily strove, they carried away with them a manifold realisation of the covering veil of personality, beauty, which makes their creations models for all time. Yet 'To-day's brief passion limits their range.'

'Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Are greater, ay, greater the while than they!
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.'[1]

With Christ, a whole new world opened on the vision of man. He rose up to greet an immeasurable destiny, then turned from the stony

[1] Browning's *Old Pictures at Florence*.

perfections of form to paint the soul. As Browning goes on:

> 'Paint man, man,—whatever the issue!
> Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
> New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
> So bring the invisible full into play,
> Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?'

Following down this course of thought, we can see how, emerging into the world of the spiritual, the believer should see a new loveliness investing all life, outward and inward, of the body and the soul. The Christian spirit has in special degree been alive to the sense of beauty, because it has been brought close to the Divine Personality, and to that Personality discoverable in all the aspects of His essential loveliness. God has unveiled Himself in a divine-human Personality, that grew amid trial into an ideal grace of character; that blossomed into the awful loveliness of an Infinite Sacrifice; that came near, through sacrifice into a tender sympathy, rivalling all that men have dreamed of friendship or love; and that has brought us thus into living fellowship with the divine glory, discovered in essential beauty by the Holy Spirit. Above self-interest, beyond hope, the soul is thrilled in

every sense by the spectacle of intellectual and moral beauty, in infinite display for human good. As the light that has travelled ninety millions of miles, breaks through the cottage window, and plays on a sanded floor, so the ideal glories of God are brought down in the Gospel, to be the foundation of our common hopes, and the spring of our daily conduct.

Thus beyond and above devotion to truth, a reigning sense of obligation, the just perception of rights, and the uncompromising spirit of purity, there is an ideal element—a thirst for the perfect, the consummately fair—which crops up in many directions, as a potency of the Christian character. True in many respects, the very height and splendour of these spiritual associations withdrew believers from the visible. Art was so largely associated with idolatry, and catered so extensively to the sensuous side of existence, that it might well seem one of the elements of heathenism, to be resisted and overthrown. Taxed to the utmost to maintain an organised existence, and in frequent peril of their lives, they were wholly absorbed in the immediate spiritual tasks of the kingdom. Yet the sense of beauty was diverted into deeper

regions, not extinguished. A new moral and spiritual loveliness marked their moral and spiritual relationships. In early days of storm and stress, men and women could only show the sense of ideal beauty, which ravished their inmost souls, in chivalries of love and honour, in lives keyed to utter sacrifice, in the quiet poetry of pure, unselfish lives.

Then from the very beginning, there was the common element of worship. The soul of music found expression in new modes, captivating to the common heart. The words of common prayer shaped themselves into a melody of human speech, grave with the new solemnities of eternity, but rich, and sweet, and tender, with pulsing human love. And audiences felt the spell of an oratory which, however rude, stirred regions of the soul—and these the deepest—which Attic and Roman eloquence left cold.

Soon, too, came the conscious desire to portray in visible form, what moved so profoundly the heart. Fragments of song passed into currency. Christian art, in feeble first endeavour, began its glorious race. From the rudimentary outlines of the Roman house, as Dr. Lanciani has been teaching us, rose the stately basilica,

blossomed into hitherto unimagined richness and dignity the Gothic minster. These were genuine fruits of the Christian spirit. As the *Divina Commedia* of Dante and the frescoes of Giotto and Orcagna show, the men of that era lived under an overshadowing infinite. Glimpses of the ideal good in cross and passion stirred their spirits; and so they lavished upon magnificent works of art all the wealth and talent of their generations; and ransacked nature for every copiable form of natural beauty, rearing those edifices which have been the marvel and the admiration of later times.

In the Reformation, man escaped from pupilage. The Roman despotism, which had strained its authority over reason and conscience, was cast out from many nations of Europe. Men came into direct personal relation to God; and problems of life, character, knowledge, filled the foreground of thought. The Christian sense of beauty, however, only broke out in new directions. Not the society but the individual, not the great central sanctuary but the microcosm of the human soul, began to attract the brooding mind of artist and poet. Spenser fancies an ideal fairy scene, where the vices and the virtues

contend for the mastery of man. Shakespeare, with an unrivalled width of horizon, reproduced in dazzling brilliance and variety of delineation, this actual world, with the moral springs and laws of action, so utterly laid bare that he is reckoned among the greatest ethical teachers of mankind. Milton sought, by a magnificent *tour de force*, to realise imaginatively the spiritual world in which the redeemed man moved, within the poles of fall and uprise, to life eternal. And Bunyan, in his immortal allegory, visualised the progress from justification to glory, of individual souls. In this subjective sphere there was not the same scope for pictorial art. But music, with her undreamt-of resources of imaginative and emotional expression, took the great themes of human faith, and unrolled their splendours of feeling and aspiration, in the great oratorios.

One immediate effect which followed the larger life, consequent on direct communion with God, was a larger consciousness of self. Everything belonging to man and man's faculties, and to the material universe, his home, became of intense interest. And so there grew up modern literature in all fields—the essay, the familiar epistle, the story, the poetry of life and manners. As

men advanced, under the overshadowing personality of God, to a wider and more varied interest in their own beings, Nature began to speak with a more articulate voice, and sensitive spirits threw themselves out, to understand and appreciate its message. Cowper, driven from the distempered world of his inner being, found in Nature a blessed refuge, a presence of calm and joy; and he has reproduced both its vaster and minuter appearances, with a vivid accuracy which has made his landscapes immortal. Wordsworth sank deeper and saw further into the life of things, setting the infinite variety of Nature's visible charms, in the rare atmosphere and serene light of the Spiritual Presence which informed all. Ruskin, tracing all the beauty of human achievement to ethical principles, became also a chief interpreter of natural loveliness to these generations.

And so Nature has become more and more the visible garment of God, and men have become correspondingly skilled to appreciate the million subtle beauties of 'this mighty universe of eye and ear,' the witchery of light and atmosphere. A whole literature has arisen, fixing in the permanent colours of art, the fleeting appearances of

earth, and sea, and sky. As writers like Carlyle and Ruskin have touched the living core of moral fact, they have become, in unexampled degree, pictorial, their words being dyed with the hues of sunrise, palpitating with the fresh life of things visible.

In the other potencies of which we have written, we have described forces that have directly gone to the shaping, upbuilding, and stability of human society. This potency—at least from ordinary standpoints—seems to touch what is ornamental rather than of necessary use. Indeed, there is a negative side which cannot altogether be ignored. We find a celebrated saying of Schiller, quoted by Ruskin (*Modern Painters*, vol. iii. 134), 'That the sense of beauty never furthered the performance of a single duty.' But that is to push æsthetics beyond their sphere, to expect more than is in beauty, or art its minister, to give. Beauty is the pictured garment of personality. Its function is to shadow forth things of the soul, under visible colour and form. If the moral inspiration be behind the beautiful form, the artistic expression multiplies the impression, and brings it home as a reality to the common heart. Bunyan's allegory has brought Bunyan's theology home to myriads who could not be

persuaded to read a theological book. Millet's pictures held forth the peasant life of France—in its strength, cruel limitations, and forbidding realism, with an occasional gleam of the ideal—as an ethical fact before the world. Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom* was a factor in the emancipation of the slave.

True, being but the pictured garment of Personality, Art is unmoral. Its function is to represent reality. It may be used to represent the virtues of some successful soap-boiler's craft, or degraded to incite the lower propensities of men, or so exercised as to express a soft luxurious habit, hostile at once to virtue and enterprise. These, however, are prostitutions of a noble capacity. Beauty is the overflow of personality, an instinct which the soul in every exalted mood seeks to gratify. Every absorbing passion of human nature seeks the large utterance, the consecration, the immortality of art. If we have not great artists, in the highest sense, that is because we are in broken water, between a withdrawing past and an unrealised future. Still, we have Watt's ideal conceptions, with their large suggestiveness. And Browning in *Saul*, and the *Epistle of an Arab Physician*,

and *Death in the Desert*, and *Abt Vogler*, and *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and *Christmas Eve, and Easter Day* (to name poems which come first to our pen), makes the pensive, much labouring soul of the cultivated man, conscious of the bodiless phantasms of many a brooding hour, embodied now in shapes of beauty, and standing forth in clear definition — the *dramatis personæ* of his own soul.

God first sought to discover Himself, by the creation of this fair universe. Man seeks full discovery, in such imaginative creation as is within his power. If the unveiling to us of His Personality be the master end of God, overtopping all lower and lesser ends of particular utility; and if the cultivation of our personal life, into full-toned harmony with the Divine, be our chief business, the sense of beauty as a potency of the Christian character may not be disregarded. From the visible splendours of creation, we have got the conceptions under which we fashion to ourselves the spiritual glories of God. And when, through Nature's million shapes of loveliness, we have realised something of the glory of Him who is invisible, these become in turn emblems,—a great picture-language

by which we make visible to others the Unseen and Divine.

'The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree ;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.'

WORDSWORTH'S *Prelude*, Book VI.

CHAPTER VII

THE CHRISTIAN WORTH OF REPUTATION

WE have already seen how, in the various social spheres, the Christian personality carves out for itself courses of action, in harmony with its inherent qualities, and the spiritual life in which it lives, thus manifesting distinct social potencies, and exerting influences of a very remarkable kind. We have now to point out that because of these activities, Christianity has in a sense created, certainly has brought into new prominence, another sphere of being—above law, higher than common human fellowship, the sphere of personal spiritual influence. God is a person, and the goal of His activity is personalities, not in isolation, but cultivated in fellowship with each other and with God, to the highest personal excellency and collective action. And so in reaching forth to the social ideals of which we have spoken, the play of sanctified character, the discovery of personal excellence, and the

controlling influence of personal qualities, are of the first moment.

We move one another, not mechanically, but by the impalpable touches of one personality on the other. Here, there is a freemasonry of spirits, more subtle than thoughts, incapable of expression in language. We are charmed by a character which we have never had time to analyse. Instinctively we discern in others a dumb note, a lack of feeling, a moral insensitiveness, which awakens a sense of alarm. And not only all combinations, but all degrees of intellectual and moral personality, communicate themselves, in the most delicate touches, to the soul. The business of the world is carried on, by the ceaseless arrangements and rearrangements of personal affinities. In Stockholm recently, we were struck with the magnitude of the Telephone tower, as witnessing to the astonishing number of the exchanges, carried through this medium, in that lovely capital. But we have a far vaster system of exchanges, affecting much more profoundly the higher life of the world, exchanges, not merely of messages about trade,—transmissions of thought, of passion, of aspiration, forming reigning trends of

feeling and disposition in circles and societies of men. Every church, every lecture-hall, every newspaper-office, every drawing-room,—indeed, every place where human beings congregate,—is such an exchange, where, by the clash of individual opinions, and the impact of personal character, parties are formed, positions are assumed, lines of action are resolved on, and practical aims and standards of conduct are fixed.

Never till Christ came, however, and only in the measure in which His truth has been realised, has the glory of human personality been seen.

What has made and makes the Christian personality so forceful, touching life at many points, and working with a sure and continuous and cumulative influence, that has, to an extent quite extraordinary, changed the face of society? We need to know this, that we may realise the social resources that are in the hands of the Church. We need to grasp the true situation as it evolves before us, in order that we may discover at what point we had best direct our energies, to heighten in days to come that influence which has accomplished so much in the past.

There are two elements of the Christian

character to be specially noted in this connection. They seem utterly opposed, mutually destructive, yet they only accentuate each the other's influence. The Christian is a decentralised man. He has died to self, renounced all individual ambitions. And yet, according to the immortal paradox of Christ, that loss of self only leads to an enlarged possession of self, to a fuller use and enjoyment of all his faculties; and so to heightened personal influence and social power. The crucifixion of self does not mutilate the real man; it only cuts at the root the destructive potencies of the old man. The soul draws away from its foolish and fleshly and self-willed activities, refuses to act along these lines any more; and being put out of all conceit with itself, yields every power into the hand of God, that He may use them all for His glory.

Decentralised, God-possessed, these are the reigning qualities of the new man. But we must pause for a moment to emphasise the nature of this possession. The Spirit does not overbear the surrendered nature which He comes to fill. Entering into the deeps of each human personality, He works with the nature, not as over-

riding it. With marvellous humility He respects our power of free self-decision. He takes what of our being we put into His hands, and, working in and with our faculties, He enlightens and strengthens us for personal choice, in the line of God's will of course, but also of our own powers, and of the opportunities open to us in His providence. What is built up by His power, and with the manifold assistance of God's grace, is a distinctive human character, in which natural gifts and spiritual qualities are wrought up into the unity of a spiritual personality, to some extent original, standing separate from all other personalities, and revealing with natural individuality a distinct type of religious excellence. As the lily differs from the rose, and both from the flowering hawthorn, or the pendulous birch, so, working with the numberless varieties of natural character, and with human free-will, the Spirit of God is building up, in wellnigh infinite diversity, human types of the one perfect life in Christ. And with this end in view—that from these innumerable phases of spiritual beauty, each precious in its own degree, human and angelic beings may rise to some conception of the infinite fulness of Him who is all in all.

Dr. Martineau, in his *Study of Religion*, shows that the power to which conscience bows, is not mere law, but moral principle exhibited in character. Types of natural, moral excellence are the moving forces which are continually raising the level of natural moral character.

His words, as beautiful in form as sound in substance, are eminently worthy to be quoted and pondered. 'For our true moral life and education, we are dependent on the presence of some higher nature than our own ; without which the mere subjective feeling of the relative worth among the springs of action, would rarely pass from knowledge into power. All the dynamics of character are born of inequality, and lie asleep amid unbroken equilibrium. To mingle only with those on the same level with ourselves, and encounter nothing but ethical self-repetitions, is the surest way to stunt the possibilities of growth; nor does any activity of the retired and solitary mind, though given to subjects deep and high, avail to carry its affection to greater altitudes.'[1]

And here again we discern how, fitting into a root tendency of human nature, Christianity

[1] Martineau's *Study of Religion*, vol. ii. p. 30.

carries that tendency to a higher plane, and makes it a force in her spiritual kingdom. By means of these decentralised, renewed, Spirit-quickened lives, built up into distinct types of excellence, Christ is primarily erecting His own spiritual kingdom, and secondarily is pouring into society those purifying and transfiguring influences which in part we have described. Ye are the salt of the earth—the antiseptic force arresting corruption, the moral savour heightening the meaning, accentuating the worth of life; —and this to the whole earth, the power in humanity that, making head against decadence of every form, can carry life to higher levels, and make it capable of new moral and social developments.

With all our understanding of this fact, we must, if we would reach out to the Christian ideal, give it profounder heed. The mighty thing in religion is not organisation, but the new creation which vitalises organisation, the life in God which is not only a spring of forceful individuality, but a new basis and bond of human fellowship. In these decades and generations, when everything, making for the natural and against the distinctively spiritual, has had full play in our most

widely accepted literature, we have not been realising how immensely the spiritual rises above the natural character in this respect. Christianity has increased the power of character as an elevating social influence many million times. There are myriads upon myriads of lives to-day, which never once have been named in print, nor are known a dozen miles from home, that, like moral magnets, are holding communities aloof from evils, and in the practice of laudable and virtuous customs, keeping them at a high level of public opinion, securing pure conditions of social life, frowning down every abuse which erects its head, every corruption which insinuates its poison, and so maintaining and advancing the civilisation of the world.

On the plane of earth we have had Napoleons mighty to aggrandise, Alarics and Attilas with marvellous outflashing potencies of destruction. But among the constructive forces, especially among those which have gone against passion and interest, in developing conscience and building up the higher life of men, where can you find personalities fit to be named beside those who have lived and wrought in the power of Christ? For sheer magnificence of personal dynamic,

where, outside the kingdom of Christ, can you parallel the spiritual ascendency of Savonarola over the corrupt populace of Florence? Once in Wittenberg, we stood in Luther's room, and tried to realise what 'the wing stroke of that mighty spirit' had done to bear the civilised world forward into a new day. His soul is marching on, in all that is most vital in the highest life of the most advanced nations of Europe and America. And vast, climatic, pervasive — like sunshine—though the influence of such a personality be, what is it to the controlling power over thought and life of a man like Paul?

We must leave this declaration to win a way for itself in reflective minds, and pass at once to a point of great importance—the place assigned to this enhanced personal influence in the kingdom of God. Having nothing, yet they possess all things. Compelled to confess their absolute helplessness and blood-guiltiness, and their need of the overcoming grace of God, they become in turn mighty powers for God. Though the dynamic be of God, it can only become a realised force in human history, as all experience witnesses, through and in consecrated men. They are more than mere channels. They are ganglions,

personalities that have been built up by the Holy Ghost, for the storage and transmission of force. In that regard their lives have a distinctive influence, a perennial value.

As Father John of Kronstadt says, 'Those in whom the Eternal Sun of Righteousness is not reflected in His perfection, are only noticeable when quite near by a very few. But if the Sun of Righteousness be reflected in them, then they are seen by all from a very great distance: they are people of all places and of all times.'[1]

And because of this, God has identified particular moments of His kingdom with consecrated men, and not only in so far as they are passive instruments for God to work through, but in the entire range, and characteristic quality of their consecrated personalities. How grandly Luther, to recur to former instances, impressed himself on the spiritual movement which was, under God, originated by him. Paul preached the Gospel of Divine Grace, but his own personality impregnates his entire message, colouring the thought and controlling the form. And what we see on the mountain tops, with the great spirits who have, in transmitting the message of God,

[1] *My Life in Christ*, p. 63, trans. by Goulaeff.

unwittingly imported their own selves, as an atmosphere and a ruling influence, upon nations and centuries, we discern also in the vales, among the leaders and teachers of the passing day. M'Cheyne, and Vinet, and Liddon, and Spurgeon, upheld one Christ, yet what a distinctive culture of the human spirit was in the preaching of each! The man, though helpless save as an instrument, is a large factor in the result.

We saw, in an early chapter of this volume, how every strand of human personality was drawn up into Christ, and how the pulses of Christ's being flashed along them all, into the core of our personality. But we have to add to this thought, if we would realise how human and divine are intertwined in spiritual work. All blessing is won for men by the workers' intercession. Not only does the power of the living Christ feel along every strand of our characters, and so mount into our wills, but our personalities, in the *abandon* of intense desire, rise up, and are admitted as moving elements, in the circle of the divine thought. The secret of intercession is priestly sympathy, entering into the needs of men, feeling with them, feeling for them, putting ourselves in their place, and drawing near, as men personally committed

to human service, to commit God. The more that God works through the man, the more the man, transfigured and glistening, shines in his work.

And identified with particular moments of the kingdom of God, these men continue presences in the life of the world. All the spiritual forces that have ever entered into the world, are living on, as every stage in the ascent of natural life is represented by creatures actually alive at this hour. You send electricity along insulated wires; and so all the pulses of distinct and definite influences, —new truth, new visions of duty, new horizons of possibility, new realisations of the power of faith, —come and keep coming along the wires, and within the insulating medium of personality.

And we feel concerned to add, with regard to those who have gone to the majority, that their connection with all this is not merely traditional and in memory. In another sphere they are going on, upon a different plane, absorbing the advancing purpose of God, yet with the note of their personal achievement while on earth, dominant in their minds. Thus, long centuries after, Moses and Elias appeared as types of law and prophecy on the Transfiguration Mount. Human progress, though we constantly forget it, is in

two lines, one within the veil, one on this earth.

When the two streams shall meet, we shall not presume to fix. Their union in the presence of Christ, will be the occasion of the full outblossoming of holy personality, in millionfold diversity of gift, but in unity of filial splendour. 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun,' and what creation waited for shall be realised. All, besides, having been swept to the ruin of the inherently evanescent, there shall stand forth, the one eternal result of the dispensation of time, the manifestation of the sons of God.

Wherever there is a gleam of personal good, that is the eternal thing. Throw yourself on that, fan the flickering into a flame. Wherever there is a touch of graciousness, seek that it may grow from less to more. Wherever there is good report, of man or thing, do not criticise or disparage; study to make them more worthy of their praise. For up the ladder of personal good, we scale the summits of time.

Thus have we sketched the place of personality in the kingdom of God. And we have done this, although it carried us beyond the social sphere, to show how every pulse of influence in the

kingdom of Christ, throbs from a consecrated character with a divine energy.

What we have learned of this Christian personality—the sources of its strength, the hidden fountain of its influence—prompt us in closing to utter those warning words. Many men would like to exploit the energies of Christianity, for behoof of their own theories. But they remind us much of the sons of Sceva, of whom we read in the Acts (xviii. 14). They attempted to cast out evil spirits by calling over them the name of Jesus. And at sound of that great name the spirits made as if to go. But they bethought them to ask whether these had the mind of Christ. 'Jesus I know,' so says this strange voice from the unseen, 'and have learned that it is no use to resist Him. Our master Satan crucified Him, with the result that his kingdom was broken. Paul I understand. All our resistance of him has only heightened his influence. But have these people the Christ's spirit or the Pauline surrender? Who are ye? Ah, mere pretenders.' Let Luke tell the sequel —'And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.'

Multitudes are aspiring to charm with the wand of Christianity. But only men saved by grace, begotten anew, and filled with the spirit of Christ, men who have been yielded up to God, and to whom His will is paramount, can either stand the strain of trial or exert the power that overcomes. Shows will not suffice. Nothing but the spirit and power of Christ, born again in redeemed human souls, can outwit evil, overcome every art of wrong, create in falsehood and deceit a paralysing sense of impotence, and lead captivity captive.

What we need, then, above everything, even for a transfigured society, is a new day of the converting power of God; that multitudes should be born again; that all renewed and surrendered souls should enter into a fuller realisation of what is possible through the indwelling Spirit, of what strength and privilege have been laid up for them in Jesus Christ. Men irk this upward path. There is a strong thirst for the broad and easy ways. But if there were no other and higher reasons, the terrible defeats which defective types of Christianity have suffered, in the onward progress of the kingdom, make it imperative, that we should ground our life and its activities in that which is imperishable, because divine.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WORLD-OUTLOOK OF THE CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY

We now come upon a remarkable incidental confirmation, of that limitless horizon of the Christian personality, which we have given in these chapters. The Christians were a very feeble folk, the most hated sect of a despised race. They lived on sufferance, herded in obscurity, and met for worship, under covert of night, in unfrequented spots. And yet they do not turn in upon themselves, cultivating a cloistered virtue, boasting an esoteric wisdom. They assume that they have the clue to all existence, the key to all knowledge. And so execrated, despised, facing possible imprisonment and death, they took up a singularly commanding and authoritative tone, toward the wisdom, and glory, and power, of that ancient civilisation. All the corruption, and confusion, and reasonless excess then prevalent, they held

were the outcome of that evil from which they themselves had been delivered; while every scrap of real good, every true thought, or right principle, or instance of public spirit, or even suggestion in their heathen dreams, were gleams of that primitive Word—the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Paul's words spoken on Mars' Hill, amid the summit splendours of ancient civilisation, 'Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him we declare unto you,' express the reigning spirit of Christian apology while heathenism still survived. As one reads Justin Martyr, and Clement, and Origen, one feels how fully they rose to the height of Paul's conception, and wherever there was any gleam of good, gave it recognition, and a place for all that it was worth, in the ethics of Christian conduct. And so, while they were critics, censors, or rather light-bearers, discovering to view the abominations of that old world, they were not aliens. They would not be compromised, and yet they would not be separated from the people. The first thrill which told them, like an earth-quake-throb in the night, that a new force had entered the world, came from the Christian love welling up in their hearts to each other, and to

all men, their purity, their impulse to serve. And if in anything they erred, some of them went even to excess, in pride of all that was noble in that old civilisation, and in tracing it to a revealed source.

We dwell upon this tendency of early centuries, because it discovers to us the working of a genuine Christian spirit, broad and sympathetic in world-view, through very loyalty to the full sum of revelation,—a spirit which, for a cause which we shall presently mention, became obscured in later centuries. Indeed, if we might presume to give advice, our present-day thinkers, who conceive of Christianity as a living spirit having affinities with all truth, might with great advantage turn their attention to those early teachers, for by analogy they may suggest to us the paths by which we are to cope with many difficulties of our own time. There are two passages which reveal the two sides of their spirit, with great force—both to be found in the brief first apology of Justin Martyr. First, as to that new selfless sympathy that made them citizens of the world. He is addressing the Emperor Antoninus Pius, 'We who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possession,

now bring what we have into a common stock and communicate to every one in need; we who hated and destroyed one another, and on account of their different manners would not live with men of a different tribe, now since the coming of Christ live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies, and endeavour to persuade those who hate us unjustly to live conformably to the good precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God, the ruler of all' (chap. xiv.).

In reading the paragraph which is to follow, from the twentieth chapter of the same work, one must remember the superb loyalty to revelation of these apologists, which carried them past all thought of compromise. We are familiar enough with the far-fetched pursuit of analogies, having for end the reduction of the supernatural to the level of the natural. But sure of his own ground in the supernatural, Justin is feeling, in a true generosity of heart, for every correspondence with divine truth, in the deeper reasonings of Greek and Roman thinkers, that he might draw them up to the full truth on the higher platform of faith. Still speaking to the emperor

on behalf of the Christians, he says, 'If, therefore, on some points we teach the same things as the poets and philosophers whom you honour, and on other points are fuller and more divine in our teachings, and if we alone afford proof of what we assert, why are we unjustly hated more than all others? For while we say that all things have been produced and arranged into a world by God, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of Plato; and while we say that there will be a burning up of all, we shall seem to utter the doctrine of the Stoics; and while we affirm that the souls of the wicked, being endowed with sensation after death, are punished, and that those of the good, being delivered from punishment, spend a blessed existence, we shall seem to say the same things as the poets and philosophers.' And then from these discovered resemblances he strives, by pointing out the incongruous bestial elements in their creed, to detach them from heathenism and draw them on to the full truth in Christ.

True in itself, in harmony with the commanding outlook of the apostle Paul, this line, pursued with varying success and degrees of sympathetic insight, was essential in the wide-spreading wreck of that old world, magnetically to attract all sorts

and conditions of men. There must have been multitudes of homeless, unattached thinkers, in the break-up of old philosophies and religions, wandering like the dove over the waste of waters. And it is to the everlasting credit of those early Christians, that these were substantially won to the Christian standpoint. Not one pagan cult, not one pagan school, was carried forward in an active and aggressive condition into the new world. Now that was done man by man, and it argues a broad, tender, just, assimilative spirit, which, would God, we possessed in the clash and conflict of present opinion. To use a great parable of our Lord, when the Church grew to be a great tree, nothing of the world's civilisation lay without. All the birds of the air found lodgment in the branches thereof.

But from another point of view, and with help of a further great parable of Christ, we may show in brief compass, the assimilative power of the renewed personality, working in a consecrated society. There is no stranger passage in the Gospels than the parable of the unjust steward. We have often puzzled over its presence in the Gospel story. That Christ should praise shrewdness associated with dishonesty, seemed to detract

from that wide gulf, which separated the stainless purity of Christ from the least shadow of moral compromise. And the R.V. reads, 'His lord commended the unrighteous steward, because he had done wisely'—making the commendation the judgment of the rich man, his master, not of Christ. Still the difficulty is not removed, for Christ homologates the rich master's judgment, and from it points lessons to His disciples.

In the field of social ethics, we begin to see the profound use of such an incident as this. Even more impressive in immediate effect upon the heathen, than the loyalty of the Christians to supernatural revelation, were their burning purity and their unswerving rectitude. Corruption came all too soon, but there can be no dispute that the profound moral impression produced on heathenism by the followers of Christ, was the main lever in displacing the old beliefs, and clearing the ground for Christianity. Out of the purlieus of that pagan world, from slave gangs, from among the minions of luxurious palaces, as well as from courts and council-chambers and camps, and from schools of rhetoric and philosophy, came men with a new hunger in their hearts, but practised and developed to strength, all of them in heathen atmospheres,

and on heathen levels of conduct, many of them in what was unjust or wrong.

Receiving them into a new life, bringing them into fellowship with Father and Son by the Spirit, were the Christians simply to ignore the entire old life, and thrust it away from their concern? To act thus would have been a wrong to the recipients, and an unspeakable blunder for the Church. Christ—or the rich master, if you will—discriminated between the sin of the steward, and the shrewdness which he displayed in connection with it. And so they were to put themselves in the place of these men cleansed in the laver of regeneration. Were there no robust elements of character bred in heathen atmospheres, no faculties disciplined in the public service, no natural or acquired influence, no profound erudition, no skill in rhetoric, which, dissociated from their pagan surroundings, purged of their pagan spirit, and consecrated to Christ, might not be used with immense advantage to the convert and to the Church? The whole world was God's world, all men were His subjects, and though they had gone miserably astray, yet as there was a divine image in man, so must there be the blossoming of some divine

ideas in their heathen society. And wherever there was a gleam of good, anything that commended itself as virtuous, or making anyhow for the higher life of man, they were—not to adopt it necessarily, at once or in the whole, but to bring all the forces of the Christian personality to bear on its consideration—to think on these things.

'If there be any virtue,'—they were not to rest content with what obviously appeared, but to make search; and, if anywhere, down in the very stews of heathen pollution, they were to discover what had one spark of remanent human excellence — no matter how fragmentary, no matter how elusive or on how low a level, they were to fan it into a flame. Because God had judged human nature as dead in trespasses and sins; because He had assumed it incapable of securing its own emancipation, and had gone to another, a divine source, for redemption, that was no reason why the new nature, rooted in God, should not attach to itself, and use for social ends, every fragment of faculty and aptitude, and moral habit, anywhere existent. Included within the redemptive plan, was the recovery of the whole man to the service of Christ.

Unfortunately, the hiérarchical tendencies of the Roman Church, waxing ever stronger, fettered, at least in practical action and expression, the freer and more spiritual conceptions of early Christianity. Instead of a living leaven, working freely through redeemed men, drawing some into spiritual unity, and many more in ever-widening circles, into all degrees of sympathy and intellectual affinity, there rose up, stark and unbending, the great objective institution of the Church, spiritual, but with a very aggressive material arm, scornful of subtle affinities, demanding allegiance, and often overriding conviction. Instead of the true, there came a false assimilation. Heathen customs, from a spirit of policy, were with slight changes incorporated into the ecclesiastical system, rather to the paganising of Christianity than the Christianising of paganism. And broad and many-sided though the Roman Church was, as she became a tradition and an empire, she lost that subtle touch of the human heart, which marked the earlier centuries, growing to be a body rather than a soul, a cult rather than a creation, immersed in struggles for her material interests, and, so far from harmonising all life and thought, provoking revolts of the human

conscience and intellect, which surely wrought to a European catastrophe.

So far, however, as living Christianity was at work in her frame,—and more at the circumference than at the centre,—she displayed, through her consecrated sons, the old assimilative power over the rude barbarians, who came pouring in successive deluges over the broken ramparts of the empire, and won dominions partial and temporary amid the dismal welter of incessant conflict, which preceded the constitution of Modern Europe. In a mere sketch like the present, however, we may pass on at once to a region better known to us, or at least nearer our own time. The catastrophe of the Reformation—the judgment of history upon the defects and errors of the Roman Church—set free many forces of immense validity to work in the Western nations. The new religious consciousness of acceptance and union with God—new in immediacy, clearness of vision, and freedom from spiritual bondage—was creative of a type of spiritual character of a very forceful description. In coming at once, without intervention of priest or sacrament, into union with God, the Christian personality in a sense reached its majority. There was a clean-

cutting decision in its judgments, as well as a force and independence and self-reliance of character —really the answer of a good conscience toward God—which gave it tenfold force in every social sphere. A blessed emancipation ensued, right round a wide circle of human interests.

Even the Reformed Churches, however, did not recover all at once the buoyancy and breadth of view of the early Church. There cannot be deflection from a right course, maintained through centuries, without errors and defects clinging to the reaction and oppositions which they provoke. They did not clearly and uniformly assume, that through this union with God in Christ they had reached back to the bed-rock of being, had risen to the master and all-inclusive view of Life. And so they did not go on the assumption, that they could come into a healthful and commanding relation, to all true thought and every real interest of man. In the practical spheres of individual conduct and civil society, the Christian personality exerted an immense influence. The worth of man was appreciated, the consciousness of public duty was deepened where not created, the sacredness of human rights was asserted—first a man's right of conscience in relation to God, and then

his civil rights, as having function and share in the commonwealth. Everything which made for his cultivation as an intellectual and moral being, —education, public worship, and so forth—was a public care. Puritanism prematurely, and on far too narrow a basis, tried to build up a commonwealth rooted in a religious view of existence ; and if it failed, and failed disastrously, as a national polity, provoking a reaction from which we suffer still, yet it has left, as a powerful leaven, many of the best elements in our national life. With the exception of a tendency which came from a quarter which we shall presently describe, the movements of liberalism, which have extended popular liberties and built up the free democratic state, owe well-nigh everything to the forces of conscience and intellectual conviction, deriving in the last resort from the Protestant spirit.

Where the defect lay—and we are only coming to see how serious it was—was in a different direction. Perhaps constituted as we are, this deviation, which we are about to refer to, rather than describe, was a necessary stage in human experience. Escaped from the wholly unwarrantable tyranny exercised over them by the Roman Church, the forces of the human intellect rejoiced

in a new-found liberty. Influenced profoundly by the Reformation, but working independently, thinker after thinker wrought out a theory of existence, tried to explain man and man's world to reason, from every possible standpoint, down to the crudest materialism. Much of the best intellect of these centuries went into those lines of study. As modern literatures grew, they absorbed in no small measures these fresh currents of speculation. Science, too, which began under Lord Bacon and Newton in a truly religious spirit, attracted by those pantheistic and materialistic theories which gave the primacy to physical law, in a growing number of its representatives, went steadily against a spiritual view of existence.

Meantime, instead of standing on the realities of the spiritual life as verified by experience, and striving to undergird the whole realm of thought and life with a spiritual view of existence, the leaders of the churches gave themselves up to internal disputes about dogmatic definitions of truth, with the result that the Church divided, and subdivided, losing far more in intellectual prestige than in practical influence. In all this was a leaven of the Romish idea, of sacred and secular. And when the rationalistic and

material views of life grew into power, they took advantage of that tendency in the churches to confine themselves within their own immediate spheres, and claimed for philosophy, based on selfish principles, the world of commerce, and industry and public life generally. Then sprang up the practical tendency, in such strange contrast to the practice of Puritan times, to rule all reference to God and the principles of Christianity, out of journalism and public discussion generally. And so the foes of Christianity proved to be born of her own household, —the offspring of tendencies, which owed their being to the lead given, and the liberties secured, by the Reformation. Of this progress —which was no progress, but really a long reaction from a still longer period of repression,— the crowning step was to deny all real knowledge of the Absolute and the Infinite, and to relegate the supernatural to the realm of illusion. In these contentions of agnosticism, the rationalistic spirit went to the furthest limit, only to find its own impotence.

The reality of the spiritual, the quality of spiritual life as a something distinct in human experience, the quite unparalleled predominance

of spiritual forces in the most advanced nations, were facts indubitable. All that agnosticism had disproved, was its own processes. Leaving the really moral and spiritual out of the problem to be solved, of course it could find no place for them in the answer.

The spiritual, then, is here and to stay. The exhaustiveness of the attack has served the end of making any renewal impossible. Onsets there will be, but never from precisely the same point. Strange eclipses do pass over the human spirit. But the spiritual has already so vindicated her possession of a peculiar power, and seems destined so to heighten that proof through succeeding time, that the assertion and demonstration of her illusory character, so far from recovering hold, will fall into ever-deeper disparagement, becoming classed at last among the monstrosities of human opinion.

For, while this demonstration has been going forward, and during a long period anterior, the Church has been recovering her hold on the true fountains of her strength. In revivals of religion, in bold assertions of the Christian conscience, in missionary enterprise, in aggressive home efforts, evangelical Christians of every name

have been making less of divisive testimonies, and have been gathering round the great facts of the new life in God. The divine reality of religion has been more deeply impressed on the common Christian consciousness, by a firmer and clearer grasp of the elements of a redeemed experience, and by superb individual demonstrations of their power. We have ceased the strife of defence, because of the conviction that we have, in the individual soul and in the kingdom of God, a divine power, self-witnessing, like all reality, obtrusive as light. Even attacks are becoming sickly and faint.

And as this redeemed consciousness is growing in believing men, we are dropping the onesided views of an imperfect past. The deathly silence in Parliament, and journalism, and literature, is beginning to yield. Men are confessing loyalty to God, seeking avowedly to be guided by the mind of Christ. There is a revolt against the selfish theories of business and public life. Christians are coming to see, that they can only win dominion, by asserting the supremacy of Christ in every sphere.

As yet this is only a feeling—a blind aspiration, working like a ferment in some brains, to

contrary issues. We have not yet got to the standpoint of Justin Martyr, and Clement, and Origen, that there is a theological, or rather let us say biblical, foundation for this. In Christ we touch the truth underlying all true things. In Christ we have the clue to the meaning and end of all realms of existence, in the discovery, by the Creator and Immanent Life Himself, of His purpose and end. That is the full Christian position, and by the maintenance of that our religion stands and falls.

Standing on this high platform, assuming the unity of truth, Christian men have to come out in a trustful spirit to all truth. God is in His world, Christ is on the throne. Man was made for God, and has an inextinguishable witness in his being's deeps. We have got to interpret the questionings, suggestions, aspirations, dreams, even seeming madness, of the human spirit; and wherever we find one gleam of good, one true conviction, one fragment of honest thought, we are to bring that into relation to Christ's central truth, and the possessors into understanding of Him, never doubting that in Christ will be found the synthesis of all truth, the desire of all nations.

Already the living Christian men of all the

churches, secure of the heavenly realities of the life in God from experience, are in this trustful attitude, 'standing four-square to every wind that blows.' Their mood in many ways has changed. To take one point, look at the cessation among Christian teachers of the partisan attitude, and the growth of the scientific spirit. Free from fear of consequences, thinkers in the Protestant churches are seeking, above all, the truth. In their new zeal, not a few, in our more conservative judgment, are being carried to extremes, being anxious to get into touch with the highest thoughts of truth-loving men. But the tendency is a noble one: we desire to conquer by truth, not by force, to win men from their own standpoints, to see the subtlest affinities with all their finest thoughts, the answers to their deepest needs, in Christ.

Already this tendency has travelled far. Among the most thorough and fairest exponents of the heathen religions have been missionaries, whose life-task it is to draw their followers to the standard of Christ. There is the most unfeigned desire, to understand and to sympathetically interpret, every form and phase of social theory current in all latitudes of thought.

While Christians are virtually alone in systematic hand-to-hand grappling with the sins and miseries of our sunken masses, yet they have shown the utmost patience and tolerance of spirit in weighing all helpful suggestions, from whatever quarter they come. With ever-mounting confidence, men of mark are putting the Christian world-view over against all partial or opposed views.

And this fresh ascendency of the Christian conception of existence, taken as a whole, is affecting the judgments of men on all subjects: the relations of masters and servants, healthful intellectual and moral conditions for the masses, strifes of capital and labour, the obligations of wealth, and so forth. Consideration of the higher interests of humanity, and of the precious heritages of our Christian civilisation, has created a new horror of war, and has moved the Czar of Russia to invite conference with the powers in the interests of peace.

All these things are matters of common observation, but the importance attaching to their cursory mention in this place, arises from the consideration, to which our whole discussion gives meaning and emphasis, that in this we

have no passing enthusiasm, but a movement from the heart of Christianity, in fullest keeping with its essential spirit and recognising its all-commanding claims. And this movement, long arrested by the sacerdotal spirit, is coming into line, on its broader plane, and with its more developed consciousness at once of the spiritual and of all other spheres, with what was best in the thought of early centuries ; a movement destined to win for Christ a complete supremacy over the thought and life of the world.

CHAPTER IX

THE AFFINITY OF THE CHRISTIAN PERSONALITY WITH HUMAN IDEALS

In a rapid survey, we have seen how the Christian spirit comes into touch with every fragment of good, whether in idea, or in character, or in social arrangements, throughout the world; gives that a larger interpretation, in view of the new order of things it has brought to light; and works the whole into a unity of intellectual and spiritual view fitted to animate the thought and guide the organised life of the race. Though inseparable from this line of remark, there is another aspect of the influence of the Christian personality worthy of special note. We refer to those great movements of many kinds, such as crusades, revivals of learning, maritime exploration, political and social reform, which have drawn the energies of whole peoples, and sometimes of families of peoples, into intense efforts for their realisation, and which have given distinctive character

and influence to particular periods of human history.

In such movements we have, it is true, for the periods during which they developed, the crowning exhibitions of human strength and excellence. And consequently the ground may seem to be covered by what has been already advanced. These movements, however, are not moral and intellectual alone. They have a material foundation. Circumstances arise in the life of the world —through the strife for material necessities, the conflict of nationalities, the growth of knowledge, or the development of special social conditions or such-like complex influences—which press upon peoples, fresh action in particular directions. Often intermingled with those, yea, finding their occasions in such vast sets of consenting circumstances, intellectual principles or religious convictions act like ferments, bringing all these circumstances into an active condition, and rousing the great masses of a nation for some popular ideal, which for the time being is the one object of their passionate devotion.

Personal elements—ethical influences—enter into those movements, but numerous causes, interests, and ambitions besides are wrought into

the social whole—which becomes the 'praise' or boast of an entire generation. The ages have culminated in those movements, and humanity has advanced through them. From one point of view, they may be regarded as tidal movements of the human spirit, lifting the race over shoals and sandbanks into new reaches of thought and action. In another and equally important regard, they are the product of material, industrial, social, and such-like conditions, which in slow secular change have combined to give the human spirit an hour of opportunity. And beyond and above even these, there are other elements entering into those vast streams of tendency which can best be explained as the results of the actions of a great overruling mind. One who sees the end from the beginning, can retrospectively be discerned moulding the forces of freedom, to prepare for emergencies which have not yet risen, and to lay foundations on which future generations may build the superstructure of as yet undreamed-of progress. Men can no more banish toil to a foreseen end from the realm of freedom, than from the realm of physical life.

It becomes, then, a matter of more than curiosity, of serious concern, in view of the course of

thought which we have been pursuing, to discover what relations this new spiritual force of Christian character has sustained to those vast public movements. From what we have seen of this force, as influencing individual characters, it cannot remain outside them. But more, if this force of Christian character derive from God, and be in immediate contact with the personal True, one would expect to find such a working into line with God's providential overrule as would bear out the claim of the Christian faith.

And here, before proceeding in the most rapid and cursory way to establish the affinities of the Christian personality with those outward historical movements, it may be well to quote the words of a scientific student of society of marked ability, Mr. Benjamin Kidd. In an appendix to the third edition of *Social Evolution*, he says, 'The history of Western civilisation is in fact simply the natural history of the Christian religion. It is this religion which has contributed the causes that have tended to the production of the type of social efficiency developed therein, which has differentiated that civilisation from all others.'

For a man of European reputation to commit himself to such a statement, which, attracting

attention from scientific men, has never met with an answer carrying general conviction, is surely a remarkable thing. There is no system of thought, which for height—we mean elevation of subject-matter above common experience—can compare with Christianity. And yet, as we have seen, it strikes with transfiguring force, not only into society but into the organised life of nations, and into those waves of popular enthusiasm which, starting sometimes from the most accidental causes, have often exerted immense and apparently interminable influence on the destinies of men.

To treat this vast subject exhaustively would be to go back over the whole ground which we have covered in preceding chapters. But as putting the copestone on our brief survey of the social influence of our religion, let us look at some of these instances in which, through those movements which we have described, Christianity has exerted a moulding power upon history of a very marked kind. And at the very outset of her course, there is one proof of her power which in some respects has never been excelled. Here we do not find the Faith, in the living personalities who realised its power, entering into a positive

upward movement, but arresting a universal downward tendency, and absolutely originating the ascending currents which were to create a new day. This first great movement in which the early Christians found themselves enveloped, was a world-wide lapse to disintegration and decay. At many points in our argument, we have seen how the social forces of the Christian personality met these elements of decay, assimilated what could be assimilated, purified what could be purified, supplied new forces of trust and love, and so, not observably in one year or generation, but as we can see, over centuries, bound the wreck of the ancient world by invisible bonds, so that there still remained, despite convulsions and incessant intrigue and cyclonic barbarian invasion, some remnants of a common consciousness among the fragments, some distant glimpses of common obligations and interests. Out of her own frame, too, the Church provided the common conception which gave outward embodiment to the sense of and aspiration for European unity. Over against her Spiritual Empire, growing to ever wider supremacy, there rose the Holy Roman Empire—a dream and an ideal, often broken down, some-

times dragged in the dust, but preserving the tradition of a thousand years, and giving scope, over what was to some extent a common European area, to these humanising influences which were changing the very foundations of government.

And from this upheaval, like the lift of a vast continent above the waves, how many subordinate movements rose, originating in the circumstances of the hour, taking shape from the actual conditions of the age, but owing their spirit to what of Christianity became operative in the common life. Knighthood was a consecration to the higher humanities, of that supreme talent of warfare, the fruit of the Christian spirit, making men conscious of the gross features of incessant conflict, and touching minds and hearts to finer issues. The whirlwind of the Crusades, though it betrayed the limitations rather than the purer spirit of Roman Christianity, was religious in essence, the result in a rough warlike time of a most vivid realisation of the Unseen. In each successive blast of enthusiasm, there was an admixture of manifold motives—lower and higher, crafty and even base, as well as unselfish and heroic. The particles were the particles of our ordinary

humanity, but the wind that raised them was a conviction wrought in them by supernatural hopes and fears.

Following, too, upon peace sprang up efforts after popular education, a cultivation of the arts of peace—agriculture, and industry, and commerce. To the prevailing military type, other civic types succeeded. The coarse egoism of the battlefield was further broken down, by ideals of poverty, of service, of death to worldly ambition, created by the nobler forms of monasticism. Then there were great monarchs in those rude times, like Charlemagne, who was possessed with the ideas of a Christian imperialism, which lived on though the frame of his empire was broken.

To us who look across the centuries with the help of the focussing lenses of historic science, the words which we have quoted from Mr. Kidd are simply true. Yea, the Church often shook the throne. Yet, as we do well to remember, common human life rested on material foundations, as it rests to-day. Men ploughed and sowed, bought and purchased, schemed at courts, debated in parliaments, fought in battlefields. Dynastic rivalries, plottings and counter-plottings, strifes of classes, with all the molecular activities of

smaller communities, engrossed men. Passions were fiercer, laws far from so omnipotent, personal licence more unmeasured. There were not the wide horizons, the diffused information, the cultivated interests, the philanthropic ideals, which, withdrawing multitudes from the direct struggle for existence, at once refine the spirit, and relax the tension of public life. Those Christian impulses came then, as they come now, in assimilated lives, in Christian personalities built up for influence, in thoughts made living and operative throughout these old societies, in affinities established between Christian principles and the practical ideals of men, unit by unit, step by step, moment after moment. Absolute monarchs might here force the pace, or there interpose the obstacle of their unlimited authority, but like the building of the coral reef in storm and calm, the real work went on amid all these surface changes.

This is now the place at which to point out a further affinity or correspondence of the Christian personality, not only with material, political, and intellectual movements into which it is caught up, but with the law of history or rather the overruling mind, grouping movements and correlating

tendencies to create for that personality a new theatre of opportunity, in which it might advance to larger influence. In saying this we speak with the deepest reverence. We do not presume to forecast the courses of providence. We do not presume, from any revealed knowledge we have of the divine purpose and end, to pronounce upon what God's intentions must be at every moment. We being finite, within finite horizons, can only finite-wise grasp His purpose. He being infinite, takes an infinite circuit to the end which He infinitely conceives. We simply take a lesson from science. In the great principle of continuity, she has formulated the great truth that nature was not intended either to deceive or baffle us. She expects to find cause preceding effect, effect following cause, without a break from beginning to end. But there are other things in nature besides cause and effect. There is apparent plan or design, the grouping of many elements to some foreseen end. There is not a causal, but there is a purposive, connection here. Human reason irresistibly discerns this, cannot even explain innumerable facts save in the language of purpose. With as much reason might a man mistrust his perception of a cause

as of a purpose, and so paralyse his science, as not a few have to their infinite loss paralysed their instinctive reverence, and conviction of the divine.

We have thus far sought to indicate the existence of purpose, in nature and in human affairs, that we may not be hindered by any floating mistrust from perceiving the full force of the following historical illustration. For centuries before the great religious revolution of the sixteenth century, attentive contemporary observers might have noted many new elements breaking the torpor of the middle ages, evident harbingers of a coming time. These however were so dissimilar, appearing simultaneously or successively in many different fields, on entirely different planes of interest, that no common end could be conceived as being served by them. What common purpose could underlie events so dissimilar as the growth of religious mysticism and the revival of pagan philosophy, peasant revolts and the speculations of closet philosophers about the relations of church and state, the invention of printing by movable types and the passing of Magna Charta, maritime explorations and the martyr witness of Huss, Erasmus's study of the New Testament

and the movement of the Turks on the south-eastern frontiers of Europe, the satires of Sir David Lyndsay and the domestic politics of Savonarola's Florence? On ordinary levels there was or could be no possible relating of all these circumstances. But substances fuse at very high temperatures, which remain untouched in ordinary furnace heats. And all these elements, and many more besides, were turned into contributory forces or constituent elements of a great new movement of the human spirit, by a mighty flame of new conviction, springing from direct communion of man with the living God. What they all in effect contributed to serve—what we must believe they were adjusted to each other to serve, unless we are to hold that chance orders the affairs of men—was a quickening and energising of human personality, which He, who was ordering all, was to bring forth in the fulness of time, through the working of His truth and Spirit. In this we have not the Christian personality moulding movements, but movements of all kinds being controlled to create a new arena of opportunity for that personality, to work in many new directions, and on a loftier plane.

This marks a wonderful advance. Paul had

said, 'if there be any praise, think on these things.' In his day Christian character was just entering into an alien system of things, slowly establishing relations with every remanent element of good. But now, Christian character is the central force of history. All those movements and tendencies visibly converge on a spiritual fact, man's direct fellowship with God, as their reason and end. And the Christian personality thus fertilised originates a great variety of movements—intellectual, social, political—whose developments fill all the centuries since. In addition to all those influences which it put forth in earlier centuries, it moved on new planes to an entirely different set of activities. The new liberties of immediate fellowship with God kindled an incorruptible sense of freedom, and inherent rights, religious and civil, which has antiquated despotism, doomed slavery, banished ignorance, overthrown privilege, created the free Church in the free State, and prompted the incessant endeavours to improve the social conditions of the people.

And while thus the forces of Christian character have been inspiring, on many planes, human movements to larger good, Providence has been working to give a marvellous ascendency to

those social ideas and principles. Here we have a series of events more remarkable than that convergence of seeming heterogeneous circumstances, on a spiritual fact hidden in the womb of time, to which we have referred. Wiclif, Huss, Savonarola, and many besides, stood for conscience, and the cause of religious freedom seemed to sink to ruin in their ashes. But not only were they to triumph on European soil; maritime exploration was, all unwitting, clearing a way for the establishment on the virgin soil of new continents of nations begotten and built up in these liberties. And this movement has advanced so far, that even already the political centre of gravity has shifted, and the balance of power is in the hand of the English-speaking peoples of the world. And wonderful to tell, while the nations in which Christian character is the most powerful force are in the van of civilised kingdoms, they stand in the most commanding, and indeed governing, relations to the heathen world.

It is one of the greatest efforts of human genius to involve a vast variety of incidents in the argument of an epic poem, that they may be grouped around a single person, or idea, and evolved in orderly succession, so as, in infinite

variety, to set off every side of the theme, and thus form an artistic unity. We place Homer and Virgil and Milton among the great ones of the earth. But to them is given only the shaping power of imagination. When, however, on the higher plane of the actual forces, and institutions, and persons of this world, we see preparations being made across centuries;—powers and elements being stored up with a view to a great movement, which, in turn, gives rise to effects, and influences, and suggestions that work on with healthful force for centuries to come, must we refuse to admire so far-reaching a plan, or ask the origin of a connection of circumstances, breathing of purpose in every line? If we trust our faculties in the realm of cause and effect, why not trust our faculties when, beyond all possible human power, we see events grouped and correlated to a far-off and unseen end, when the Divine Personality discovers Himself in a purpose, which could only have meaning and value for a Spiritual Intelligence. To point out all these consequences of the Reformation would be to write the history of Western Europe. Even the many-headed movement of socialism, in the opinion of distinguished representatives, owes

its origin to the new views of man and human right made current in that creative age.

The limits assigned to these chapters will not allow us to refer in detail, to the many movements which the forces of the Christian conscience originated, or which the Christian spirit took up, raised to a higher plane, and used for the highest good of mankind. We must, however, point out one most impressive respect in which the affinity of the Christian personality with human nature is seen in solitary majesty. The Christian personality is the only intelligence that has ever steadily and consistently, for any length of time, directed its efforts to the well-being of the race. The horizon of all other workers is narrow, and even militantly narrow, in comparison. Long before civil governments turned their thoughts from the entanglements of European diplomacy, the Christian conscience moved out into regions beyond. The world is its country and mankind its brothers. The enormities of the slave-trade engaged its attention. The iniquity of slavery moved Christian men to action and self-sacrifice. Heathens were protected, against themselves, from the worst cruelties of their religious systems. And above

all, the churches committed themselves to an organised effort at world-conquest.

With the religious results of these missions we have not here directly to do. But they have had magnificent social effects. A friend of ours, a missionary from the South Seas, was once accosted roughly by a sea-captain and challenged before an unsympathetic auditory to show the utility of Foreign Missions. 'Sir,' said our friend, 'if you had been shipwrecked on my island twenty years ago, you would have been killed that night and eaten next morning. To-day, you would be received into a Christian community and receive every kindness and attention.' No such work, in the sudden creation of really civilised communities out of the most unpromising materials, has been accomplished by any other force, or has ever before been accomplished in the history of man. The Christian conscience that found elements in common, and woke new affinities in the breasts of Greek rhetoricians and Roman senators, has a cunning touch of the savage heart.

Then look at the subsidiary results of this Christian enterprise. Missions had long done a pioneer work all round the African coast, had

pierced the secret of the Dark Continent in the person of Livingstone, before, by the magnetism of his great and simple nature, and his touching sacrifice, he attracted to that land the notice of the world. Great things must come from the partition of Africa, but here nations are following the Church—the political, the Spiritual. In India, too, Christians of every name are turning to the highest good of that congeries of peoples, the British supremacy, which was not worthily won. No one can deny the place of the Christian spirit, in the yearnings for progress and reform, at last so strong in China. This universal adaptation of Christian forces is a mighty new proof of the supremacy of our religion as a social influence.

Beyond all question, we are in the dawn of a new day, in which, despite all antagonist influences, the Spiritual is rising to a new ascendency among men. If Christians are true as in former times, the Spiritual will cast even the material forces of society into disparagement, as it rises in new power, freely attracting to a service of liberty, the intellect and conscience of men. The temporal, which seems so solid, is evanescent as a breaking bubble. Faith—conviction—vanishing like a breath, is alone

solid and eternal. Expressed in words, wrought out in momentary deeds, it does not falter, fail with the circumstances which attend its birth, but lives on through all change—as Cardinal Pole is made to say in Tennyson's Queen Mary—

> 'I have seen
> A pine in Italy that cast its shadow
> Athwart a cataract : firm stood the pine—
> The cataract shook the shadow.'

CHAPTER X

EPILOGUE

THE field of thought which we had marked out is now covered. And as we have kept close to the ground of practical utility all through, the reader might well be left to draw his own inferences and conclusions. As we are coming to the point, however, of putting out of hand, thoughts with which we have long kept company, and as rising up from the strait horizons of the separate parts we catch the drift of our modest treatise, as an accomplished result, we are conscious of certain objections which may rise in the minds of different readers, which, if we might, we would obviate and put away.

One objection has from the beginning been present to our thought, with which we have in part already dealt. Many would not scruple to say, 'You have been describing a barren Utopia, beyond human nature's daily realisation, and, if realisable, so slow, and limited in action as to

leave vast areas of the social problem untouched.' This is said with an air of absolute conviction, as if the matter were a foregone conclusion. And yet, when we examine the grounds on which it is held, and realise the changes on the Christian method which it suggests, we find the conviction to be baseless, the conclusion a fallacy.

We do not return to show, as has already been more than once done, that if you take away the distinctively Christian character as cause, you cannot have the social effects which it has produced. Social problems, however, are so complex, it is so easy to lose ourselves in the secondary causes and elements of a situation, and so few comparatively have the faculty to run to earth the true source of any social movements, that this consideration, though absolutely final, does not weigh with many. Let us look at this matter from an entirely different point of view.

We have naturalised the saying of our neighbours, that men have the defects of their qualities. Masses of men, however, sometimes become wall-eyed, through the very intensity with which they pursue certain lines of thought. And they are sometimes most absolute, when the telescope is at the blind eye, and they are reading off their

own limitations as if they were laws of the universe. For a very considerable time, now, the active and aggressive minds of the world have been laying hands on old institutions which had ceased to serve their purpose, and have been rearranging society on a popular basis. Government—national, district, municipal—is in the hands of the people. And wonderful changes have taken place, as the result of this age-long tendency. A new faith in regimentation has risen up in the hearts of men. Having gone so far, many are encouraged to believe that they can go much farther. Choosing, for instance, what is of service in Christianity, the people can work it up into a popular system of rule which will meet all social need, and secure the welfare of mankind.

The telescope is to the blind eye. An inference is being drawn from one set of circumstances, and applied to a wholly different set of circumstances. A study of the well-known remarks of Comte on organisation and liberty, might show the confined scope of such efforts as those in which these men have been engaged. Organisation, he tells us, is the positive law of society, but when in any instances organisations have

ceased to serve beneficent ends, then liberty—an inherently negative good—liberty to innovate or rearrange, becomes a very positive blessing. What man has made, man is free to unmake and rearrange. But there are many institutions in this world where human liberty has no regulative force. It is not given even to a congress of scientists, to rearrange the principles of electrical science by popular vote. They must simply receive and truly interpret them, or they would come to grief. And so revelation, which does not simply lay bare the laws of a particular natural force, but carries us back into living relation with the Divine Personality who originated and sustains them all, is simply to be received. The energies by which it has renewed the face of the earth, are only for those who have yielded their wills to the Divine will.

When such thoughts create a suitable reverence, those persons of whom we have been speaking will see that they cannot improve on the Divine method. It is to read a private prejudice into facts, to call religion a Utopia. No force in Britain is more powerful. What organisations are so widely diffused? The daily press comes as a wind of opinion and is gone. Where

it is an intellectual force, it only touches a select portion of the people; and, mainly as a carrier of news, interests the masses of mankind. In every parish in the land the church is a stable institution, an organised centre of influence and activity. Children grow up under the shadow of it. The tenderest and most solemn associations of life twine themselves around the House of God amid environing graves. And if there come seasons of reaction, when the world gains on the Church, there have been, and please God, will be, others, when all terrene institutions and interests shall dwindle into insignificance as mere surface matters, compared with the supreme concerns of the soul.

This age, which many have been regarding as the apex of all the past, is really, at least in these tendencies to which we have referred but the coming to a turn, of the long reaction of liberty, against the imperfect organisations which hitherto have done the business of the world. And now that this disintegrating work of liberty is wellnigh done, now that government in every kind is on a popular basis, the question for this and succeeding ages is, what are we going to make of our new democratic machine, so as to accomplish the

highest social good? By what principles are the democracies of the future to be regulated, on what foundation are they going to build? Led captive by a phrase, are they to regard government of the people, by the people, and for the people, as involving self-sufficiency, and the throwing off all submission to God, with the political and social servitudes of the past? Or even in the fulness of our personal and social liberties, are we going to realise our creature limitations? To choose the former — and it seems already to be the implicit choice of multitudes—is to go back to the pagan isolation of the past. To choose the latter course—to realise that, as we live in a universe which we cannot bend to our will, but whose laws we must observe to utilise, so we are the creatures of a God whom we must obey, to know, and rest in, and enjoy; in other words, to bring our social as our individual life more fully under law to Him, is to reach out to human fellowships, and stimulating moral liberties in these fellowships, such as the world has never seen, and approximate toward that millennial glory which the prophets foresaw.

In this aspect, we have during the present generation a superb opportunity of making a

decision, which shall carry forward from the past all her noblest results, and affect the course of ages yet unborn. We do not refer to any re-establishment of religion, or even to any extensive reorganisation of the Church, but rather the falling away from individual, and partial, and mere earthly standpoints, of the great mass of our people to realise, more thoroughly than ever, the necessity as for individual so for social well-being of a living spiritual religion. It is the leaven in character which tells on the social life of the world. We want to impress—so far as our words can go—all Christian men with the conviction, that more than ever in these democratic days religion is a great social necessity. There is a responsibility lying upon them, of exerting their full influence on their fellow-men, of discovering in every sphere the power of their faith, such as has burdened no previous generation of mankind. Our horizons have so widened, our resources are so immensely increased, the solidarity of the various races and families of man has advanced so far, that the central problem fronting us, whether we shall sink toward the secular level, or rise further toward the Christian ideal, carries in its heart woe or weal for the whole world.

Now, one thing we think is evident, even from such a slight survey as we have been able to give of the social potencies of the Christian character, and that is the solitary power of Christianity as a social force. Put aside for a moment all that invests the Christian religion, for the most of us, with unspeakable reverence—test it by principles and results in this one relation, and what we have asserted will be fully established. To put the matter in a nutshell, the difference between Christianity and other social theories is, that while they are mere social arrangements, it is a social dynamic. The extreme forms of socialism are founded on mistrust of the individual. It invokes a *Deus ex machina* stronger than the individual, which may bring all within limits, and reduce them to a level. Christianity purifies and disciplines the individual, takes away the divisive, and plants a social principle within his heart, and leaves him to build up a society with those like-minded, based on mutual love. And so the soul of the Christian scheme is liberty, of those other theories force. Christianity works for personality, that every man may be free and may be helped to become all, in the highest respects, that he was designed to be. To secure

material content, the other theories do not scruple to override essential qualities of personality.

So much for general distinctions. Let us now rapidly sketch the chief outlines of the Christian social method, which ought to commend it, not only to believers, but to whomsoever the higher life of man is a reality and precious. And first of all, reverting to a remark of Mr. Ruskin, whom we have already quoted, Christianity does not isolate the problems of man's social relations, but treats them as one aspect of his whole life and manifold activities. Not till the whole personality of man in its origin, environment, functions, and end is understood, can the meaning of his social relations be grasped. But in Christianity a far more important discovery than that of man is made — the discovery of God — not that He is, but what He is. In studying the relation between sun and planets, Newton hit on that theory of gravitation, which explains how rain descends, and rivers run to the sea, and mud falls to the bottom, and a thousand things happen round our own doors every day. In this universe it is the great things which explain the less, not the less the greater. And so from the discovery of our master-relation to God, or rather

from God's discovery to us of a new relation of love and grace into which He would bring us, a light falls, as we have seen, upon the whole of life, illumines every relation, discovers the immeasurable worth of human existence, and invests personal judgment, and decision, and action, and co-operation, with momentous results.

We are not playing in an unreal world with tokens, to which we give the names false and true, keeping up the game, but uncertain how far what we and our neighbours bustle about, has any relation to reality. The Christian has touched reality, central eternal reality, in God. Yea, reality has touched him, in the Holy Spirit. He has won his way through to the bed-rock of being. Things have a momentous importance for him, because everywhere he has to deal with God's facts in God's universe. Everything must be related to His will, even what is the right use of money, position, power, and so forth. And not only regarding single things, but in a larger scope, we must act in the millionfold relations, and with the millionfold forces, of social life according to our best judgments, so as to bring all—it may be only in distant approximation—yet as near as possible to His mind.

Again we say, we are not playing the game, working out our own scheme, but approaching to reality—ideal reality, eternal in God, by how much we are far from it, weak; by how much we conform, strong.

Here, as we have seen, there is nothing stereotyped. We are delivered up to the service of the absolute True, and there can be no goal for us till we reach the True. Though we have just lain down to rest, when the bugle sounds we must up and march again. Every glint of truth, every fragment of an idea, every genuine criticism of a position whencesoever coming, must be welcomed. We have neither interest nor limit but the full-orbed truth. That Christians have not always lived up to the height of this master-relation is all too true. When they have substituted the interests of a Church or Creed or School for the service of God in His Spirit, they have sunk to fearful depths of craft and selfishness. But either they had to part with Christ, or part with that spirit. The truly Christian conscience burst the old servitudes. And then the grand Christian sense of reality, seen in unflinching obedience to right and unswerving reverence of God, has transfigured the world.

If we have faith in the essential goodness of the scheme of things, and if what we want is not to pluck the greatest advantage for ourselves or our class, but the highest good for all—the view just given should be sufficient to impress us with the peerless influence for social well-being of the Christian faith. But further, Christianity follows the example of nature in all realms of life in building up from a creative unit of force, and thus has the support of all other parts of the Divine plan. Mr. Kidd, as we have shown, has pointed out the solitary power of a supernatural religion as a social force. But beyond insisting on ultra-rational sanctions as being necessary to the production of this influence, he does not conduct a special inquiry to discover what in religion, or in the personality influenced by it, actually produced these effects. Approaching the subject from the side of science, that did not lie to his hand. He accepted the fact of religion as other facts, and noted its public effects. Approaching the same problem from the side of religion, it is to this we have turned our thoughts. And limited though the area of our discussion has been, and dominated by an immediately practical aim, we have seen that

in this spiritual cell formed by the recreative touch of God, and fertilised by the Spirit, you have the spring of the whole movement. Hegel speaks of the human spirit as a subject-object, a sort of double-headed reality, with a face to the inner world of self, and another to the outer world of matter. In the field of moral endeavour, the Christian personality is such a double-headed reality.

Within, there is a most intense sense of individual responsibility. But with this, there is a personal surrender of his being to God, which fully opens his life to the play of motives and considerations, which are central to the whole race. And these two impulses meet, and are harmonised in perpetual union with, and assimilation of, the Spirit of Christ. Because Jesus has met his responsibilities, and helped him to come into essential harmony with his moral ideal, — the will of God, — he yields himself to Christ. And he yields himself, in order that by the power of Christ he may, from love, rise into conformity to the Divine will. And drinking thus a larger life, with a personal end and anxiety to begin with, he wakens to a new fact, that perfection is love,

not something to get merely, but something which we get in giving, a spirit of service, a living for the whole as God lives, greatness lying in the capacity of service—he that is chief of all, being servant of all.

Here again it is evident we have to do not with an effusive altruism,—a calculated benevolence that lies within the limits of human judgment,—but with what reaches to the roots of things. In the thirst for spiritual perfection, the soul is carried out in service of humanity and God. In all such service, and amid its millionfold details, the soul goes up for personal reward to a fuller personal conformity with the Divine will, which in turn becomes the platform of a vaster vision. And both these impulses are sustained in him, by the inflowing Spirit, and close personal communion with the living Christ. In a very real sense, then, Christ is born again, reincarnated in the believer, and lives and works through him. This being so, must there not be in the social service of Christian personalities a steadiness, a unity, a far-reaching scope unknown to the sporadic and limited influences of other men? While stooping with an unrivalled sympathy to the immediate necessities of man, it does not

rest in these. There is an intensity in its common kindnesses, from vision of the greatness of the soul. In all beneficence, too, there is a cathartic and elevating aim. It attacks the problem of human need not in spots, nor by random impulse, nor for immediate results, but on plan, going out to the circumference of human need in the missionary enterprise, toiling at tasks which may not bear fruit for many days. Then all such labour on the floor of earth is engirt by the boundless horizon of man's eternal destinies.

We spoke at length of the Christian sense of honour, how it sent men, because of measureless benefit received, into every sphere and relation, with the impulse to recognise obligation and to meet it. Comparing this vast new force to steam, we showed how it enhanced common obligations and widened the sense of obligation. But there is a further and immensely important element. We have seen our common flowers trying to grow in an unkindly northern clime, and again amid the blaze of the southern sun have we seen them starring the pastures of Switzerland and Palestine. In numbers, in profusion of blooms, in perfect form and colour, those flowers seemed like a fresh discovery.

And so the Spirit of Christ, working in human nature, is creating fresh sensibilities, subtle sympathies, perceptions of obligation, horizons of interest, ideal ardours. They come unnoticed, now from lowly lives made noble by consecration, now from simple men immersed in practical duties but living the life of faith—General Gordons, George Müllers, Florence Nightingales—now from sickbeds, and anon from the high places of duty and responsibility. These exceptional risings of the human spirit well up and flow on and disappear, but they raise the general level. And this enlarging sense of obligation, this widening area of mutual service, is having results far richer and fuller than we realise. Barriers are breaking down. Human intercourse is increasing. Each nation is discovering its peculiar riches for the good of all. The sense of common, intellectual, social and moral interests, of common human service, of a trusteeship for the less-favoured nations, is limiting the private interests of kings, discounting dynastic rivalries, and creating a growing sense of the impossibility of war.

Ay, but what of rights, individual rights, class rights? Is not Christianity the religion of the

capitalist? Men have very short memories. The first successful stand in Scotland for the rights of the people, was made under inspiration of Christianity, for the rights of conscience as against James and Charles. Puritanism achieved the first great instalment of our civil rights in England. None can doubt the pre-eminence of the Christian spirit in the early reforms of the century. It is to malign a religion having such a record to speak thus. The religion of Christ is the patrimony of no single class, but of all. And with whatever limitations and defects, arising from individual unworthiness, it steadily works for the good of all. Even in those matters especially attracting attention at this time—the relation of capital to labour, the adequate remuneration of labour —the results which we deplore are in no sense owing to Christianity, but to the exclusion of Christianity from the commercial and industrial sphere. Political economy was to govern this whole region on principles with which religion was declared to have nothing to do. Not religion, but the theoretical separation of religion from one sphere of human life, produced the difficulties with which we have to contend.

And all through, in innumerable instances, the Christian spirit in renewed men has been abating the severity, and obviating the worst consequences of this seemingly infallible theory. While relief has come and a change has been passing over social problems, just because men like Mr. Ruskin have insisted on man being viewed as a whole, have insisted on the introduction of those moral and religious factors which enter into the true end of man, and which the ruling scheme of social science ignored.

One thing is true, Christianity will take no partisan view for one class against another; it will not bind itself to any one party in transitory social disputes. It stands above all, that it may bring a larger justice into the life of all, abolishing, so far as its influence extends, mere prescriptive rights which have no real foundations. And basing right on service as a principle which holds through the whole domain of right, we have an absolutely simple rule capable of immediate application, proceeding on tangible grounds, which can be measured and weighed, and promising a just solution. In this foundation of real right, too, we have not only the basis of a present settlement, but whenever necessity arises, a ground

for readjustment. And here too Christ, by His whole view of life, by inspiring His followers with a sense of the true proportions of life and its healthful aims, assists in regulating the relative value of service, and helps to keep in ascendency, the worthy, and not the lighter and more trivial elements of the community. Since, too, they are members of the same humanity who are engaged in those diverse services, the tendency of the Christian spirit is to break down the excessive barriers of distinction (while recognising real differences), and to equalise the human lot. In one week some years ago, I was in a great popular park in an English city, and in the policies of a Scotch duke. The people's park was ablaze with elaborate floral device and rich colour. Empty, and half-empty borders, showed the shrunken state of the nobleman. This refined pleasure had passed from the exclusive possession of the Dukes, to the common possession of the Demos. The peculiar advantages in former times of the classes, are now the privileges of the masses. In Trafalgar Square they have a gallery, surpassing all private collections; in the British Museum a library and collected treasures, unequalled in the world.

This is more than justice in the bare and rigorous sense. These are outcomes of a larger sense of right, what is owing not merely for specific service but to the human nature which men wear, the faculties with which they are endowed, the possibilities which lie within their reach. Abolish inequality utterly by a policy that disregards differences of service, reducing all to a dead level, and you abolish this give and take, these higher and subtler impulses that are the finest fruit of a spiritually cultivated personality.

With very much left to write, we must draw to a close. Might we add a word to the Christian reader? We have a work before us, which will drive us in upon Christ and the resources of the Holy Spirit. Only divine power can enable Christian men, to live up to the height of their message and their opportunity. Let us turn from the subsidiary tasks and ceremonial elements, to the present living responsibilities of the sons of God. Let us continue in the bondage of no mere traditional views, but verify them afresh through prayerful study of the Word of God. Let the living Christ, dwelling richly within you, in all wisdom, make His own truth a transfiguring present reality, in which duty lies clear, through

which we are led out to discern the real issues of the hour, the practicable ideals of the coming time. 'He that overcometh and keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations . . . even as I received from My Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'

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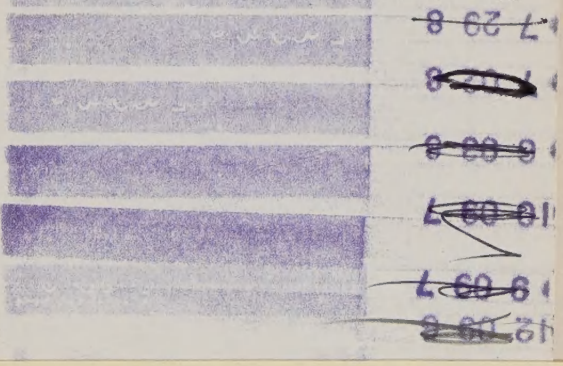

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